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Lenin and the *Iskra* Faction of the RSDLP

1899-1903

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**Doctor of Philosophy Resubmission
University of Sussex
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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree

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University of Sussex

Richard Mullin: Social & Political Thought: DPhil Submission

Lenin and the *Iskra* Faction of the RSDLP: 1899-1903

Abstract

Using primary material, much of which has been overlooked up to now, this thesis argues that the *Iskra* newspaper and its organisational appendages were conceived by Lenin and his closest collaborators in a pragmatic attempt to strike a balance between the theoretically authoritative and revolutionary, yet inactive *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and the more active, but reformist and theoretically unclear *Rabochee Delo* grouping. As such, *Iskra* does not appear to have been the product of a detailed plan conceived in Siberian exile, as is often thought. Nor did it represent the extreme left wing of the Russian social-democratic movement of the time, a place occupied by *Osvobozhdenie Truda*. *Iskra* and its supporting organisations formed a faction of a broader party, the RSDLP, whose institutions it aimed to rebuild and to which it aimed to give ideological leadership broadly in sympathy with the basic views of Plekhanov, though differing with him in terms of tactics. Starting from a position of weakness both in the emigration and inside Russia, Lenin at first sought an alliance with the ‘Economists’ of *Rabochee Delo* rather than a policy of open factional struggle, which was at this stage (1900-01) advocated by Plekhanov. Only when serious vacillations in the *Rabochee Delo* line started to emerge in the spring of 1901 did Lenin break with this tactic, in despair of any useful co-operation with the politically unstable followers of the economist journal. From the end of 1901 an open struggle for the support of the RSDLP local committees inside Russia began, in which the Economists were unable to marshal support, whilst *Iskra*, owing to its network of full-time ‘agents’ and their assistance, eventually won a dominant position. On this basis, plans were laid for a Second Congress of the RSDLP that reveal a distinctly democratic and pluralist conception of party organisation on the part of Lenin, A conception which does not square with his dictatorial reputation. Accordingly, this thesis argues that the Second Congress was a credible, if not perfect representation of rank and file opinion within the RSDLP at the time and that the split within the *Iskra* faction that took place at this meeting owes more to pre-existing tensions with the Russian *Iskra* organisation rather than any unreasonable behaviour on the part of Lenin. Specifically, individual agents showed signs of weariness in relation to Lenin’s policy of factional struggle prior to the Second Congress. For this reason they sought, but failed to find compromise at the congress with the Bund and the economists, and as such provoked a split with the supporters of Lenin within *Iskra*. As such, it was actually an inopportune search for compromise which appears to have provoked the split within *Iskra*, rather than dictatorial or intolerant practices on the part of Lenin. The supporters of Martov assumed that the Bund and the supporters of economism could be appeased, but this was not in fact the case.

Notes on Names, Texts and Dates

Every individual who appears in this study is referred to by his or her best known pseudonym even though, in the documents we have studied, they are referred to using a variety of different aliases. We are grateful to Brian Pearce's index of cadre names which can be found in his translation of the *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, the footnotes and endnotes in the *Leninskii Sbornik*, and Krupskaya's *Memories of Lenin* for help in linking pseudonyms to definite individuals. As a result we can draw attention to the fact that the following individuals who appear in this study are widely known by the following alternative names:

<i>Name in the Study</i>	<i>Alternative Names</i>
VP Akimov	VP Makhnovetz [real name]
EM Alexandrova	Stein [at the Second Congress]
LO Dan	LO Kantsel-Tsederbaum [maiden name]
T Dan	FI Dan
RS Halberstadt	Fischer [Second Congress]
VN Krokhmal	Fomin [Second Congress]
PA Krasikov	Pavlovich, Ignat, Pankrat
EE Levin	A Egorov
Iu O Martov	L Martov
AS Martynov	AS Pikker [real name]
AN Potresov	Starover
DB Riazanov	DB Goldendach, N Riazanov
AM Stopani	Lange [Second Congress]

Apart from this, we cannot refrain from the observation that some of documents we cite are written in non-standard Russian, a fact which has generated a protest from a native Russian speaker who proofread the draft. Unfortunately, many of her painstaking corrections to the citations were in fact modifications of the original text, which the present writer was unable to accept for quite obvious reasons. The only modifications we have made to any text is the use of the modern Russian spelling in place of the one in existence prior to the orthographic reform of 1917, which is due to the limitations of modern keyboards, and the sparing use of ellipsis

All place names are the official names ones in use at the time and no offence to cultural, political or linguistic sensitivities is intended when we refer to Białystok as 'Belostock', Dnipropetrovsk as 'Ekaterinoslav', or the northern capital of Russia as 'St Petersburg'. For clarity, we always use the Gregorian and not the Julian calendar, even though both are used in the documents upon which this study is based.

Chapter One: Historiographical and Historical Context

The subject of Lenin's *Iskra* is one familiar to the widest of audiences, yet to date it has been subject to only a few detailed studies, all of which leave space for a new contribution.¹ The present thesis aims to show that *Iskra* was a *faction* within the broader political party, the Russian Social-Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP), rather than simply a political newspaper. It acknowledges that *Iskra* involved a quite extensive group of individuals united by a common set of political ideas who worked in co-operation to maximise the influence of these ideas within the broader party, using a variety of methods, not just journalism and theoretical argument, in a context where partisans of opposing views organised in a similar fashion. The half-dozen individuals who made up the theoretical leadership of *Iskra* are well known: many, but not all have received biographical treatment in the past.² By contrast, the factional apparatus of *Iskra* considered as a whole has yet to receive much attention: just a few definite aspects of it have so far received consideration by historians. The first of these is the intensely practical work of *Iskra*'s corps of underground agents that distributed literature and promoted the faction's influence inside Russia. In the Soviet Union, this network was indeed the subject of scholarship focusing on the methods of transporting literature, funds and personnel in an illegal environment, with specific attention being given to the movements of definite individuals and their contributions

¹ The main studies dedicated to this area do not appear to have gone beyond article length and in any case date back several decades: A Wildman, 'Lenin's Battle with *Kustarnichestvo*: The *Iskra* Organisation in Russia', *Slavic Review* 23: 3 (Sep., 1964) 479-503; GM Deich, 'Voprosy konspirativnoi tekhniki 'Iskry' v pis'makh VI Lenina 1900-03gg', *Voprosy Istorii* (1969: 9) 49-66; Ia P Volin, 'Leninskaia 'Iskra' i podgotovka vtorogo s'ezda RSDRP', *Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP i mestnye partiinye organisatsii Rossii* (Perm: Permskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1973); and E Ia Olkhovskii, 'VI Lenin vo glave 'Iskry'', *Istoriia SSSR* (1974: 6) 21-36. Of these, the works of Wildman and Volin appear to contain serious factual errors, a circumstance which perhaps explains Wildman's failure to include the material from his article in his later and better known *The Making of a Workers' Revolution: Russian Social-Democracy 1891-1903* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). Sections of KN Tarnovskii *Revolutionaia mysl', revolutionnoe delo* (Moscow: Mysl', 1983) are also useful as an overview though, as we shall see later, there are some significant 'white spots' in this account. Possibly more useful are HJ Tobias, 'The Bund and Lenin until 1903', *Russian Review* 20: 4 (Oct., 1961) 344-357 and HJ Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

² These works are discussed below, in the second section of this chapter.

to the cause of Soviet Communism.³ A second aspect to have already received treatment is the written work of Lenin and Plekhanov during the *Iskra* period, including the RSDLP programme and some of the main polemical exchanges: these have in fact received widespread attention. The history of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*'s organisational relations has also attracted some interest, though studies on this theme have not yet included a reliable account of how this group fitted into the broader *Iskra* apparatus.⁴ The *Iskra* faction as a whole appears to have consisted in a number of interlocking circles and institutions: the *Iskra* newspaper with its editorial board of six, later seven individuals; the theoretical journal *Zaria* produced by this same collective; the corps of underground agents often referred to as the 'Russian *Iskra* organisation' and a succession of émigré circles dedicated to the support of these enterprises. The last of these included not only *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, but also 'The Revolutionary Organisation "Sotsial-Demokrat"', the Foreign Committee of *Iskra*, and the League of Revolutionary Russian Social-Democrats Abroad. All these organisations appear to have been limbs of the same factional grouping at the head of which stood the *Iskra-Zaria* editorial board on the one hand, and the Samara-based 'bureau' of the Russian *Iskra* organisation on the other. Thus it seems that the task of providing a comprehensive history of the *Iskra* faction is still a long way from completion and that the present study can only partially fill the gap which exists.

A closely related problem is the way in which scholarship has accounted for the ideas and activity of the factional opponents of *Iskra* inside the RSDLP, the understanding of which inevitably colours attitudes towards the *Iskra* faction. In Soviet studies, the anti-*Iskra* components of the RSDLP such as the Bund, the Economists and, later, the Mensheviks, were generally ignored.⁵ In the west, work to

³ PN Pospelov et al, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin: biografiia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskovo literatury 1963) 69-74; GM Deich, 'Voprosy konspirativnoi tekhniki 'Iskry'', 49-66; E Ia Olkhovskii, 'VI Lenin vo glave 'Iskry'', 21-36

⁴ Perhaps the most detailed account of *Iskra-Osvobozhdenie Truda* relations to date is to be found in SH Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963) 209-37, but many of the factual claims of this section are challenged by the present study.

⁵ One exception, clearly based on limited access to the documents of these factions appears to be: Ch Panavas, *Bor'ba bolshevikov protiv opportunisticheskoi teorii i politiki Bunda* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Mysl', 1973)

date has viewed the factional struggle within the RSDLP essentially from an anti-*Iskra* perspective, and the result has been a tendency to recriminate with, rather than to explain *Iskra*'s behaviour, whilst vindicating that of the anti-*Iskra* factions.⁶ This itself appears to be the consequence of the lack of a reliable account of *Iskra*'s basic theoretical and organisations positions, along with a failure to fully appreciate that during the so-called '*Iskra* period', a struggle for power was taking place within the RSDLP driven by incompatible reformist and revolutionary conceptions of social-democracy.⁷ Indeed, previous English language studies appear to have blurred this important ideological distinction, thus presenting the factional struggle as an unprincipled 'squabble' rather than a conflict which can be explained rationally, as the result of serious political differences. Not only that, Soviet scholars who acknowledged the ideological character of the conflict do not appear to have had access to the documents of RSDLP organisations such as the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad ('Union Abroad'), the (Jewish) Bund and the Union of Southern Committees and Organisations ('Southern Union'). Consequently, leading post-Soviet Russian scholarship still appears to show limited interest in these same organisations.⁸ For these reasons, the present study aims to lead the discussion away from previous western interpretations by studying the programmatic and organisational views of the opposing RSDLP factions and by showing how, in an attempt to promote one or other of these contrasting sets of principles, each side evolved political tactics suitable for an intra-party struggle, the soundness of which were tested in opposing attempts to secure the leadership of the party. As such it seeks to explain the defeat of the Bund and the Economists at the hands of *Iskra* in a way

⁶ A list of such works would include those by Tobias already cited, along with J Frankel, 'Economism: A Heresy Exploited', *Slavic Review* 22: 2 (Jun., 1963) 263-84 and J Frankel, 'The Polarisation of Russian Marxism 1883-1903', in *Vladimir Akimov on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism*, ed. J Frankel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 1-98

⁷ This idea is clearly rejected by Frankel in the works cited in the previous note and, more recently, in LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is To Be Done? in Context* (Leiden & Boston: Brill 2006) 279-83

⁸ See e.g. O Nazarov interviewing CV Tiutiukin, 'Bol'sheviki nachinaiot i vyigrivaiot', *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, "Portfel'", 32 (5935) (6-12 Aug., 2003) 15. In this remarkable interview given by the editor of *Otechestvennaia Istoriia* on the centenary of the Second Congress of the RSDLP, the latter quite alarmingly does not once mention the role of the Bund in the creation of the 'Bolshevik' party, nor its departure from the aforementioned at this Second Congress.

somewhat different from previous English-language histories of Lenin, Bolshevism or other aspects of the Russian social-democracy, hardly any of which have given a genuinely detailed account of this process. The almost ubiquitous view among such works is neatly summarised by Harding, who argues that *Iskra*:

indulged in intrigue, they rigged conferences and congresses to their own advantage, above all they used their newspaper as the main weapon in their struggle. In short they used every trick in their considerable repertoire of political wiles to re-establish their pre-eminence.⁹

This explanation of *Iskra*'s success in terms of its use of the dark political arts does not acknowledge the political weaknesses and mistakes of the anti-*Iskra* groupings within the RSDLP, which often made the recourse to unfair or rough methods unnecessary on the part of *Iskra* in the pursuit of their goals. The present study will examine these weaknesses as well as the differences of principle which separated the contending factions, showing that the conflicts during the 1899-1903 should not be understood as 'squabbles' that focused on questions of individual status and power. It will argue that they involved a clash between clearly articulated, but opposing political viewpoints. The study does not aim to criticise any particular point of view in the contest, but will draw attention to the way in which certain political choices and methods of the anti-*Iskra* groups failed to serve the agendas of these groups. It will also demonstrate that Lenin was in fact not simply an aggressive polemicist during the *Iskra* period, so much as a master deal-making politician with a strongly legalistic frame of mind, a keen understanding of how to mobilise support with a political party for his ideas, and a clear strategy. It will therefore show that the struggle between *Iskra*, the Economists and the Bund was a rationally-conducted, rule governed process rather than a breakdown of some pre-existing political unity and, as such, a morbid phenomenon.

We are not therefore primarily concerned with the contents of the *Iskra* newspaper, even though a study of these is much overdue and would do much to support the contention that Lenin was not simply an intemperate polemicist. Nor is

⁹ N Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought, Volume One: Theory and Practice in the Democratic Revolution* (London & Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1977) 179

there any intention to detach *Iskra* from its context or to view it in isolation. Rather, the aim is to trace the development from its origins of the *Iskra* faction, from the circumstances of the newspaper's conception during the summer of 1900 through to the final establishment of its supporting circles and networks as discrete organisational entities during the winter of 1901-2. This development appears not to be the product of a pre-conceived plan on the part of Lenin, as is widely believed, so much as a response to circumstances, specifically a failure to find agreement with the 'Economists' of the Union Abroad on a range of issues. Indeed, it is for precisely this reason that it is impossible to study *Iskra* in isolation from its opponents. The second part of the study will show how, in the wake of these disagreements, a factional struggle broke out between *Iskra* and its Economist and Bundist opponents, this section giving particular attention to the methods *Iskra* used to achieve dominance within a series of RSDLP institutions. As such, the study is not primarily concerned with polemical exchange, except where it is necessary to show these debates had a clear influence on party-organisational relations, so much as the practical methods of struggle Lenin and his co-thinkers employed. For this reason, there will be no consideration, as perhaps might be expected, of documents such as the 'Protest' against Kuskova's *Credo*, 'Where To Begin?' or *What Is To Be Done?* which have in any case been sufficiently discussed in many previous studies. There will however be a detailed analysis of the precise context in which these documents appeared that will hopefully challenge some of the current preconceptions concerning them.

i) 1899-1903 in the Context of Russian Social-Democratic History and Theory

The general history of Russian Marxism and social-democracy is a subject which has scarcely been ignored to date. Its organisational and theoretical origins through a dialogue between Russian revolutionaries on the one hand, and Marx and Engels on the other have been traced with remarkable clarity and completeness by Eaton¹⁰ and Wada,¹¹ whilst certain episodes in this process have been studied in detail by Shanin.¹² Eaton shows how Engels took an early interest in the potential for a Russian revolutionary movement, beginning to learn the Russian language as early as 1852, Marx joining him in this endeavour during the winter of 1869-70.¹³ Eaton shows how the first contact of Marx and Engels with Russia came through Bakunin and that, following the disagreement between the Marxists and the Bakuninists in the International Working Men's Association, Marx began to correspond with Russian individuals and circles he believed capable of forming the nucleus of a democratic revolutionary party. During this period, Wada shows how Marx and Engels displayed scepticism towards the utopian socialism of the Narodnik tradition, rejecting the idea that the structure of the village commune illustrated an innate tendency of Slavic nations towards socialism, and the assumption that capitalist economic development would not occur in these places.¹⁴ To expose these theories, it seems that Marx and Engels deliberately sought out the works of Russian economists, such as Flerovskii¹⁵ and Ziber,¹⁶ who were themselves not especially linked to the revolutionary movement. However, as has been noted in one recent article, it is one-sided to suggest

¹⁰ H Eaton, 'Marx and the Russians', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41: 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1980) 89-112

¹¹ H Wada, 'Marx, Marxism and the Agrarian Question: II Marx and Revolutionary Russia', *History Workshop* 12 (Autumn, 1981) 129-150

¹² *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism*, ed. T Shanin (London: Routledge, 1983)

¹³ H Eaton, 'Marx and the Russians', 108

¹⁴ H Wada, 'Agrarian Question', 131-2

¹⁵ Ibid 133

¹⁶ H Eaton, 'Marx and the Russians', 89, 104-5, 108; EA Grigor'eva, 'Y istokov teorii i praktiki rossiiskikh 'marksistov' ', *Voprosy Istorii* (2004: 7) 78; JD White, 'Nikolai Sieber: The First Russian Marxist', *Revolutionary Russia* 22 : 1 (Jun 2009) 1-20

that any of these figures were the first Russian 'Marxists'.¹⁷ Both Grigor'eva and Eaton expose the limitations of this view by showing that Marx and Engels were also consistently interested in establishing connections with Russian revolutionary circles which were actually active in the country, and were not simply made up of émigrés. Of particular interest to them appear to have been the *Narodnaia Volia* organisation,¹⁸ generally viewed simply as a terrorist group, but in fact, as Shanin shows, possessed of a fully worked out political programme and strategy that incorporated 'agitation' tactics among all groups of society its members believed capable of rebelling against the autocracy.¹⁹ Whilst there is nothing in the documents Shanin presents to indicate that *Narodnaia Volia* adopted a rounded-out Marxist view of society, the parallels between these documents and the later programmatic statements of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* on the one hand, and the Russian Social-Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP) on the other, are too great to ignore, especially when we consider the 'democratic' sections of these later documents.²⁰ These connections are especially intriguing in the light of Eaton's article, which shows how Marx was persuaded to write pamphlets and articles for the *Narodnaia Volia* organisation through his contact with the activist Morozov, whose arrest whilst smuggling these works into Russia prevented them ever appearing in print. In the light of this evidence it seems clear that Marx and Engels were seeking to combine the economic theories of individuals such as Ziber with the revolutionary strategy of *Narodnaia Volia* and that his apparent failure to achieve this fusion points to the absence of a credible group of 'Marxists' in Russia during Marx's lifetime.

The picture of Marx and Engels's early contacts with Russia is thus one of both scholarly interest and revolutionary activism, involving different sets of individuals, neither of which, given their isolation from the other can fairly be considered 'Russian Marxists'. Neither group emphasised the significance of the urban working class, which was indeed at this stage in its infancy in Russia, in theoretical or

¹⁷ EA Grigor'eva, 'Teori i praktiki', 77-94

¹⁸ H Eaton, 'Marx and the Russians', 104; H Wada, 'Agrarian Question', 141, 147

¹⁹ T Shanin, *Late Marx*, 207-12, 223-321

²⁰ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1924-7) ii 357-62; 1903: *Second Ordinary Congress of the RSDLP: Complete Text of the Minutes*, translated by B Pearce (London: New Park, 1978) 3-9

practical terms. Nonetheless, it was during the *Narodnaia Volia* period that the first exclusively workers' revolutionary organisation appeared in Russia, a surviving document of which has been published by Harding and Taylor.²¹ Naturally, this early example of a Russian workers' organisation does not express a conventionally Marxist view of the development of Russia, in so far as it shares the *Narodnaia Volia* notion that a constituent assembly would be able to reorganise economic relations in society more or less at will, whilst placing great emphasis on co-operatives rather than large-scale common ownership and planning.²² Harding and Taylor's work shows that this type of thinking - clear in relation to democratic aims of the revolution, yet underdeveloped in terms of its conception of a transition to socialism - persisted among the small groups orientating towards Marxist thought which existed during the 1880s.²³ The most theoretically developed of these, *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, appears to have been met with relative indifference on the part of Marx and Engels owing to its émigré status.²⁴ However, the annihilation of *Narodnaia Volia* appears to have exposed Marx and Engels's support for the latter's assassination campaign as over-optimistic. In the wake of *Narodnaia Volia*'s defeat, there was clearly a gradual increase in the status of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, which took place for a number of reasons. First of all, and in contrast to some recent discussions of early Russian Marxist thought, the four surviving members of the group had played a serious role in Russia's populist underground.²⁵ All had previously been involved in the *Zemlia i Volia* organisation and were therefore able to give advice to the younger generation on organisational questions.²⁶ As Baron notes, the group's much noted inactivity and

²¹ *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879-1906*, trans R Taylor, ed. N Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 41-4

²² T Shanin, *Late Marx* 231-2; R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 42

²³ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 74-80

²⁴ H Wada, 'Agrarian Question', 141-2

²⁵ M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution: Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists 1900-24* (Yale, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) 2-3; P Iu Savel'ev, 'GV Plekhanov i zagranichnyi soiuz russkikh sotsial-demokratov', *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (2006: 6) 51-9

²⁶ S Kucherov, 'The Case of Vera Zasulich', *Russian Review* 11: 2 (Apr., 1952) 86-96; SH Baron, 'Plekhanov and the Origins of Russian Marxism', *Russian Review* 13: 1 (Jan., 1954) 38-51; SH Baron, *Plekhanov*, viii, 17-19; B A Engel & CN Rosenthal, *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1976) 166; H Eaton 'Marx and the Russians', 107; D Hardy, *Land and Freedom: The Origins of Russian Terrorism, 1876-9* (London: Greenwood Press, 1987) 79-123

isolation from Russia in fact stemmed partially from the extradition of Deutsch from Germany, from where he had been trying to smuggle illegal literature into Russia, to stand trial in a Russian court. As a result of this he received an indefinite sentence of Siberian exile on account of previous involvement in terrorist conspiracy.²⁷ Apart from Deutsch, Zasulich was also a well-known figure, one of the few would-be assassins from the Russian terrorist tradition to escape a similar fate by virtue of receiving a jury trial.²⁸ As well as this, she was one of the few surviving revolutionaries to have corresponded with Marx and to have sought discussion with him, not only on the question of revolutionary tactics, but also on questions relating to Russia's economic development.²⁹

For these reasons, it seems that Marx's initial assessment of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* seems less than fair when applied to the changed circumstances of the 1880s and 1890s. If the latter's tactical rejection of terrorist assassinations during the split within *Zemlia i Volia* ensured that *Chernyi Peredel*, the initial name for the Plekhanov group, suffered an earlier practical defeat than that of the terrorists in the form of their withdrawal from the Russian arena of struggle,³⁰ the defeat of the latter was ultimately more profound, in so far as it involved the complete destruction of its leadership in the period following the assassination of the tsar.³¹ The Plekhanovites lived to fight another day, and as a result were able to set themselves the task of developing Marx's own thoughts on Russia's social and economic development, in many respects challenging them, whilst at the same time retaining at least a minimum connection with the underground circles that re-established themselves inside Russia.³² Theoretically, there was a recognition on the part of Plekhanov that there was simply no question of Russia avoiding capitalist development completely,³³ a question on

²⁷ SH Baron, 'The First Decade of Russian Marxism', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 14: 3 (Oct., 1955) 315-330

²⁸ S Kucherov, 'The Case of Vera Zasulich', 86-96

²⁹ T Shanin, *Late Marx* 105-117

³⁰ H Wada, 'Agrarian Question', 142

³¹ E Belfour, 'Zemlya vs Volya: From Narodnichestvo to Marxism', *Soviet Studies* 30: 3 (Jul., 1978) 302

³² SH Baron, 'The First Decade of Russian Marxism', 321-3, 327-30

³³ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia* ii 199-231

which Marx, in his exchanges with Zasulich had been ambiguous.³⁴ Connected to this question, it seems that both Marx and Engels held the perspective that a Russian revolution was imminent.³⁵ They believed that such an upheaval would spark sympathetic, socialist revolutions in the west, the character of which would as a matter of course shape post-revolutionary Russia's development.³⁶ They had, clearly, erred on the side of optimism in this respect. Accordingly, Plekhanov described a more pessimistic perspective which did not count on immediate revolution, but which speculated instead on the common economic consequences of either a revolution or period of political calm: the development of an urban working class and the partial depopulation of the village commune.³⁷ It seems that this more patient outlook has at times been represented as the view that Plekhanov had a very inflexible view of history, which stated that Russian was still to pass through a lengthy capitalist phase of economic development.³⁸ However, a study of the early programmatic statements of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, one of which receives closer attention in the next chapter, indicates that this was not the case.³⁹ Programmatically, the organisation appears to have attempted the balancing act of removing all barriers to poor peasants' departure from the village commune whilst at the same time defending the interests of the great majority who initially chose to stay. This contradiction was to be resolved by demanding an end to the intervention of the state bureaucracy in village affairs, as well as a *laissez-faire* economic policy designed to promote larger scale agriculture on the one hand, and the development of state supported rural co-operatives on the other.⁴⁰ This clearly represented a break with the earlier utopian socialist tradition in Russia, whose thought tended towards the preservation of village relations in fairly

³⁴ H Wada 'Agrarian Question', 129-32, 143-7; T Shanin, *Late Marx* 105-117

³⁵ K Marx & F Engels *Selected Correspondence 1846-1895*, trans D Torr (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1936) 436-8; H Wada 'Agrarian Question', 140-1

³⁶ H Wada, 'Agrarian Question', 147

³⁷ SH Baron, 'Plekhanov on Russian Capitalism and the Peasant Commune, 1883-1885', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 12: 4 (Dec., 1953) 463-474; SH Baron 'Plekhanov and the Origins of Russian Marxism', 49

³⁸ e.g. J Frankel, 'The Polarisation of Russian Marxism', 7; R Service, *Lenin: A Political Life, Volume One – The Strength of Contradiction* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 40-3.

³⁹ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia* ii 357-62

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 361

traditional forms. In contrast to this view, Plekhanov certainly did argue in favour of the unleashing of capitalist economic forces, which he believed was capable, far more than any revolutionary conspiracy, of dragging post-reform Russia into the modern era. However, as Walicki has correctly noted, Plekhanov never developed a precise notion of how long this capitalist period would last and the presence of a pre-formed workers' socialist movement at the very beginning of this process suggested that capitalist development might well be shorter than in the west.⁴¹ Equally, there is nothing in Plekhanov's writing to suggest that this capitalist development would automatically correspond to a period of constitutional 'bourgeois government', as has sometimes been suggested: clearly he takes the view that capitalism will develop regardless of the class character of the government and in spite of any government's attempt - be this government revolutionary socialist or tsarist - to change existing social relations by decree.⁴² Thus it seems that Plekhanov's conception of a new capitalist Russia was predicated less on a grand theory of history than on a reaction to the failures of the populists' revolutionary hopes. Recognising before all others that *Narodnaia Volia* voluntarism had perhaps destroyed hopes of revolution for a generation, he began to imagine alternative paths to socialism in a backward country.

The extent of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*'s practical connections with underground circles inside Russia are sometimes under-estimated, but as Akimov,⁴³ Baron⁴⁴ and most recently Savel'ev⁴⁵ have shown, the Plekhanov group made repeated attempts to establish links with sympathising groups both in Russia and in the emigration. The documents published by Harding and Taylor⁴⁶ rather confirm the general view that the circles active in Russia during the 1880s, such as the Blagoev and Brusnev groups

⁴¹ A Walicki, 'Russian Social Thought: An Introduction to the Intellectual History of Nineteenth-Century Russia', *Russian Review*, 36:1 (Jan., 1977) 40-1

⁴² R Service *Lenin: A Political Life, Volume One – The Strength of Contradiction* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 43

⁴³ VP Akimov 'A Short History of the Social-Democratic Movement in Russia', trans. J Frankel in *Vladimir Akimov on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism*, ed. J Frankel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 231-7

⁴⁴ SH Baron, 'Plekhanov and the Origins of Russian Marxism', 315-330

⁴⁵ P Iu Savel'ev, 'GV Plekhanov i zagranichnyi soiuz russkii sotsial-demokratov', 51-9

⁴⁶ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 74-80

represented something of an ideological half-way house between populism and Plekhanovism, one result of which was that *Osvobozhdenie Truda* remained a highly exclusive circle. Nonetheless, there is evidence that it collaborated with other self-defining social-democratic groups operating inside Russia.⁴⁷ It seems the Plekhanov group thus acquired a periphery of ideologically inconsistent émigré and Russian supporters during the eighties and nineties: Akimov claims there were Marxist circles operating in as many as nine Russian cities at the beginning of the latter decade.⁴⁸ Lenin appears to have completed his political apprenticeship among these groups, and this fledgling movement appears to have been reorganised on his initiative following a meeting with Axelrod in 1895.⁴⁹ With this change, the 'Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad' was created, the main responsibility of which was the production and transportation into Russia of the journal *Rabotnik* and its newspaper like supplement, *Listok Rabotnika*, both of which were edited by *Osvobozhdenie Truda*.⁵⁰ In the years preceding this meeting, the social-democratic movement inside Russia appears to have grown quite dramatically, with student concern over the famine crisis of 1891-2 providing it with an educated cadre, around which were quickly gathered circles of workers for the purpose of theoretical instruction.⁵¹ With the appearance of Lenin and others on the scene, the character of this social-democratic work changed to some extent. Instead of attending 'a clandestine school'⁵² at the city's Technology Institute which catered as much for their general education as their social and political concerns, St Petersburg workers participating in circles were from this point on encouraged to agitate for strike action and political protest within their workplaces.⁵³ This tactical turn coincided with an ever more restive mood among mill and port workers in the northern capital, the result of which was a protracted strike wave during the mid 1890s.⁵⁴ To cater for this new militancy, Lenin initiated a newspaper

⁴⁷ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 232

⁴⁸ Ibid., 285

⁴⁹ J Frankel, 'The Polarisation of Russian Marxism', 22-4

⁵⁰ Ibid., 24

⁵¹ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 234-5

⁵² Ibid., 235

⁵³ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 143-4, 150-3

⁵⁴ D Kol'tsov, 'Rabochie v 1890-1904', in L Martov, P Maslov & A Potresov (eds) *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii*, (The Hague: Europe Printing, 1968) 188-93; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 237-54;

for the St Petersburg movement which sought to expose the politics of the government as well as economic questions, though the copy was seized before the first issue was circulated, along with Lenin and many of his collaborators.⁵⁵ Thus, a pro-Plekhanov element appeared to be very active inside Russia during the mid-1890s, even if its ambitions were thwarted by the police. As such, the picture often presented of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* being isolated from Russia, whilst partially true, is one sided, and does not take into account the actual links which were established despite remarkable difficulties.

The arrest of Lenin and his collaborators did not put an end to these links. Akimov⁵⁶ shows how, in the wake of the police raid, a de-politicised labour movement trend polemically termed 'Economism' came to dominate in St Petersburg, a trend which in fact remained visible throughout the period studied in the present thesis. However, he also acknowledges that, in the leadership vacuum created by the St Petersburg arrests, Kiev appears to have become the most active local organisation in promoting the cause of an explicitly anti-autocratic and revolutionary social-democratic labour movement in the tradition of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*.⁵⁷ The result of the efforts of the Kiev 'Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class' appears to have been, first of all, the creation of the newspaper *Rabochaia Gazeta*, two issues of which were apparently distributed around the eastern Ukrainian region, the success of which seems to have inspired the foundation of the Russian Social-Democratic and Labour Party.⁵⁸ The fact that this new party's structures were strangled at birth is sufficiently well-known, but the paradoxical circumstances of its creation have been given less attention. First of all, there is the question of its clearly left-wing, politicised manifesto which in some respects - notably in its view that the working class would have to lead Russia's democratic revolution - appears to represent a radicalisation of Plekhanovite ideas. Earlier statements from

R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 15-219

⁵⁵ NK Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, trans. E Verney, (New York: International Publishers, 1930) 16-18; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, fifth edition, trans. J Fineberg & G Hanna, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House & London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960-79) 87-93

⁵⁶ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 249-84

⁵⁷ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 298-301; J Frankel, 'The Polarisation of Russian Marxism', 30-1

⁵⁸ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 293, 302

Osvobozhdenie Truda were ambiguous on the question of which section of society would actually lead the revolutionary fight with Tsarism, and clearly the confidence of the initial RSDLP statement can be traced to the labour struggles of the preceding years.⁵⁹ Unfortunately for the party's founders, the strike wave appeared to have been dying down at the moment the manifesto was issued. Not only that, neither *Osvobozhdenie Truda* nor most of their closest allies in St Petersburg were actually involved in the production of this statement, though Taylor and Harding appear to provide concrete proof that Axelrod was in fact communicating with the Kiev group behind the foundation of the RSDLP.⁶⁰ Thus, whilst armed with a militant and fairly authoritative founding document, not to mention a constitution negotiated by representatives of its seven supporting organisations, the RSDLP had patchy practical links with the main theoreticians and leaders who had inspired Russian social-democracy in the previous decade and a half.⁶¹ If the group around *Rabochaia Gazeta* momentarily appeared to be filling that void, the utter annihilation of this newspaper and its organisation meant that the opening period the 'party' was largely devoid of prominent individuals either loyal or even particularly sympathetic to Plekhanov's views. In other words, the so-called 'economist' trend appears to have come to the fore in the first period of the party's existence, despite the ultra-Plekhanovite stance of the party's founding documents. It seems that this paradox does much to explain the conflict between the Plekhanov loyalists and their opponents that forms the focus of the present study.

In an attempt to provide a backcloth to the thesis, we have shown how the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* organisation was crucial to the theoretical development of Russian social-democracy and that it also played a practical role. However, in the light of some recent literature on the subject, the question of the Russian movement's relations to the German social-democratic party must also be raised, even if what has been said so far strongly indicates a unique, authentically Russian line of development on the part of the former, rather than deference to German leadership.⁶² In relation to

⁵⁹ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia* ii 273-330

⁶⁰ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 227-41

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 223-6

⁶² M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution: Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists 1900-24* (Yale, New

this alleged link to Germany, it is important to note *Osvobozhdenie Truda's* participation in the founding congress of the Second International in 1889. Baron shows how this integration of the group into international social-democracy represented a significant triumph for the group over its Narodnik rivals, and that it may have precipitated a certain revision on the part of Engels to his previous attitudes towards the group.⁶³ However, the Plekhanovites' participation in the International does not appear to have generated any noticeable change in their orientation towards Russia. Their policy of trying to establish connections with various underground circles continued, only during the nineties it appears to have obtained greater success owing to the developments in Russian society just discussed. It should therefore be fairly clear that, whilst it is hard to deny the authority in general terms of German social-democrats such as Engels, Liebknecht, Kautsky, Luxembourg and Bebel on the Russian movement, attempts to portray Lenin as a 'Kautskyite' or an 'Erfurtian' seem to reflect vast oversights relative to the early history of Russian social-democracy described here, even before some of the obvious political differences between Kautsky and Lenin are taken into account. Merely noting instances in which Lenin acknowledges a theoretical debt to Kautsky, or the fact that *Neue Zeit* was circulated and read by the underground circles in Russia simply cannot substitute for a thoroughgoing study of this history which actually confirms the traditional viewpoint of Russian scholarship that Plekhanov was the first pioneer of Russian Marxist thought, regardless of the *contretemps* with Marx and Engels, and that the earliest social-democratic organisations in Russia sought to obtain links with *Osvobozhdenie Truda* in the search for theoretical clarity. There appears to be no evidence that Kautsky or any other German leader sought to intervene in the Russian movement in a manner calculated to bypass, or otherwise undermine the authority of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* who were, on the contrary, recognised by the International as the official representatives of Russian social-democracy in the international arena.

Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993); RC Mayer, 'Lenin and the Concept of the Professional Revolutionary', *History of Political Thought* 14 : 2 (1993) 249-63; RC Mayer, 'Lenin, Kautsky and Working Class Consciousness', *History of European Ideas* 18:5 (1994) 673-681; RC Mayer 'The Status of a Classic Text: *What Is To Be Done?* after 1902', *History of European Ideas* 22:4 (1996) 307-20; LT Lih *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is To Be Done? in Context* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2006)

⁶³ SH Baron, 'The First Decade of Russian Marxism', 321

The present thesis is an attempt to study the means by which Lenin sought to re-establish the practical pre-eminence of the revolutionary, Plekhanovite variety of Russian social-democracy within a party dominated by the Economists. In the work of Donald in particular, this struggle has been linked to Bernstein's attack on the Erfurt programme within the German party, thus once again raising the idea that Russian social-democracy was in effect being guided from Germany during its early history.⁶⁴ It is certainly true that the overthrow of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* leadership at the First Congress of the Union Abroad appears to have taken place more or less simultaneously with Bernstein's challenge to 'orthodoxy' at the German party's Stuttgart Congress of 1898. However, to imagine that the Russian Economists were simply copying their German colleagues in this endeavour again utterly underestimates the Russian roots of this challenge to Plekhanovism. In particular, there is the question of Russian 'legal Marxism', popular among students and to be found in thick academic journals which, whilst defending Marx's economic theories, had nothing to say on the latter's political doctrines.⁶⁵ Whilst it is true that, in the wake of Bernstein's revisionist arguments Russian legal Marxists such as Struve took a much more critical approach to Marxist economics, and in doing so clearly followed Bernstein, there is no evidence that the Russian social-democracy was ever seriously influenced by this departure.⁶⁶ Certain individuals connected to the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad did attempt a Bernsteinian criticism of Marxism but, as shall be shown in the second chapter of this study, they were quickly disowned, not only by the followers of Plekhanov, but also by the main 'Economist' leaders. Struve, Prokopovich and the other Russian 'revisionists' subsequently formed the Cadet party. For these reasons it is hard to accept Baron's suggestion that 'Economism' was simply a Russian variant of German 'revisionism'.⁶⁷ The present study will show that the former had a clearly anti-theoretical, 'pragmatic' stance, possibly owing to the significant number of Bundists connected to the trend, whereas German revisionism

⁶⁴ M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution* 1-66

⁶⁵ A Egorov, "Zarozhdenie politicheskikh partii i ikh deiatel'nost", in *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v rossii v nachale XX-ogo veka*, ed. L Martov, P Maslov & A Potresov (The Hague: Europe Printing, 1968) i 378-82

⁶⁶ M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*, 33-5

⁶⁷ SH Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism*, 196

represented a direct ideological attack on Marxism. There is also the crucial problem that Economism seems to have appeared in Russian much earlier than Bernsteinian 'revisionism' did in Germany. Akimov and Egorov show quite clearly that, more than anything else, the strike wave of the mid-nineties appears to have raised the profile of Economist views.⁶⁸ It is of course true that anti-Marxist trends had been present in the German labour movement from the very beginning, and that these pre-Bernstein trends could potentially have had an effect on the Russian movement.⁶⁹ However, it appears that no historian to date has attempted to demonstrate this, partially because the 'legal Marxist' tendency in Russia seems to represent a much more credible source of the anti-revolutionary trends in the Russian social-democratic movement.

ii) *Historiographical Trends in the Study of Lenin and the RSDLP*

In reviewing previous contributions to the history of Lenin, it is perhaps customary to start by noting the sheer volume of research activity which has been directed towards this subject, whilst at the same time drawing attention to the political motivations and dubious reliability of a significant amount of it. There is really little to add to these complaints beyond re-emphasising the point that 'polemic' and 'political bias' are not the natural monopoly of Soviet scholarship.⁷⁰ Perhaps it is more pertinent to observe that in the post-Soviet period, the very idea of investigating the factual details of Lenin's political activity appears to have fallen out of fashion, yielding a situation where one recent attempt to write a classic political history of the Russian social-democratic movement was described as both 'odd' and 'comical' by one reviewer, owing to the strong disagreements it generates.⁷¹ This perception of the study of Lenin and early Russian social-democracy is less than helpful given the fact that work on the publication and translation of Russian social-democratic documents

⁶⁸ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 237-54; A Egorov 'Zarozhdenie politicheskikh partii i ikh deyatelnost', 376

⁶⁹ See e.g. FL Carsten, 'Georg von Vollmar: A Bavarian Social-Democrat', *Journal of Contemporary History* 25: 2-3 (May - Jun. 1990) 217-335

⁷⁰ N Harding, *Leninism* (Basingstoke: MacMillan 1996) 5; LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered* 13-28

⁷¹ AS Lindemann, reviewing M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*, *The American Historical Review* 99 : 5 (Dec., 1994) 1682

is ongoing, and as such will probably still have an effect on conclusions drawn in the past. For this reason, new contributions to the study of Lenin need not be regarded simply as 'reinterpretations' of a body of pre-existing primary evidence if they do not include the publication of new, 'previously unseen' documents drawn from the archives. This view meets with two significant problems. On the one hand, as the next section of this study will show, new data is still being collected, published and translated, and some of this will inevitably force the revision of some previous generalisations concerning Russian social-democracy. On the other, and perhaps more significantly still, there is the problem that primary data is not only assembled in fashion that ensures that a reliable store of it increases over time, as appears to be the case with most historical subjects. There is also the problem of the clear suppression, marginalisation and outright destruction of evidence for political reasons.⁷² Not only this, it appears that immense political and institutional pressures may be applied to scholars in this area that might discourage them from making full use of the available material.⁷³ For these reasons, in the following literature review it seems necessary to examine not only the best of the secondary accounts of early Russian social-democracy, but also to provide a brief summary of the main developments in the publication and use of primary evidence, in so far as the former is clearly limited and shaped by the development of the latter. On this basis it will be possible to define as precisely as possible the documents used in the current study which are absent from previous ones, even though the present work is in no sense the product of an investigation into unpublished material. Equally, it will provide useful leads should anybody wish to develop or challenge the findings of the present study.

The publication of documents concerning the early history of the RSDLP, *Iskra* and Lenin's involvement in it could be said to date from the events of 1905-7, beginning shortly after Lenin's initiation of a new 'Bolshevik' newspaper, *Vpered* and the winding up of the 'Menshevik' *Iskra* with the onset of these revolutionary events. With the change in external political circumstances and a corresponding alteration of arrangements within the RSDLP itself, it became possible to view the entire '*Iskra*

⁷² RW Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era*, (London & Basingstoke, 1997) 90-6

⁷³ LT Lih, 'How a Founding Document was Found, or One Hundred Years of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?*', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4:1 (2003) 5-6

period' of 1900-1903 and the subsequent period of factional strife between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks up to the Fourth 'Unity' Congress as completed phases in the party's history. Thus we find the 1908 collection of Lenin's writings *Twelve Years*, which included his polemic contributions against the Narodniks, Liberals and Economists dating back to the mid 1890s,⁷⁴ not to mention the collection *Iskra za Dva Goda*, a Menshevik compilation of articles from the period in which they controlled the newspaper.⁷⁵ The Lenin compendium is perhaps best known for the statement, noted by Harding,⁷⁶ that *What Is To Be Done?* must be considered 'in connection with the concrete historical situation of a definite period long since passed in our party'.⁷⁷ Whilst, in one context, this might be used against the argument that Lenin, during the *Iskra* period, formed 'a party of a new type', a staple argument of Stalinist histories, it also serves as concrete evidence that Lenin was at this stage consciously trying to produce, if not a historical monograph, at least a collection of historical documents with no immediate relevance to current politics and, as such, one of the first contributions to the historiography of this subject. Such collections appear to have had a didactic purpose, the aim of them being to raise and extend the political consciousness of Bolshevik activists through an awareness of how their faction had developed over time, and how it had been shaped by the experience of past conflicts. This type of work was therefore much imitated after the October revolution, with the issue of what is today known as the 'first edition' of Lenin's *Collected Works*.⁷⁸ Similar projects were realised in relation to Plekhanov and Trotsky⁷⁹ during the 1920s. From 1924 these were accompanied by a project whose history lasted almost as long as that of the Soviet Union itself: the *Leninskii Sbornik*,⁸⁰ which included correspondence and drafts from Lenin's personal archive as well as material written by his closest colleagues. Indeed, it is through this source that a significant number of documents never incorporated into later editions of Lenin's *Collected Works* can be

⁷⁴ VI Lenin, *Collected Works* xiii, 94-113

⁷⁵ *Iskra za Dva Goda: Sbornik Statei iz Iskry* (St Petersburg: Saltykov, 1906)

⁷⁶ N Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought, Volume One* 161

⁷⁷ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xiii 100

⁷⁸ VI Lenin, *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow, 1920-26)

⁷⁹ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1924-7); LD Trotsky, *Sochineniia* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1924-7); LD Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia* (Moscow 1923-5)

⁸⁰ *Leninskii Sbornik* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1924-85)

accessed by the inquisitive historian. In relation to the present study, letters exchanged between Lenin and Krupskaya on the one hand, and the Russian network of *Iskra* agents on the other,⁸¹ and a section of the correspondence exchanged between members of the editorial boards of *Iskra* and *Zaria* are of particular importance.⁸² Other sections of the latter can be found in the published letters of Axelrod and Plekhanov, two volumes of which appeared in 1928,⁸³ and the Menshevik-published volume of Martov-Axelrod correspondence.⁸⁴ During this same period, the journals *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, *Katorga i Ssylka* and *Krasnyi Arkhiv* were also published, which provided a broader survey of the Russian revolutionary movement. These contributed a large amount of testimony from memoirists which offers valuable insight into the life of the pre-revolutionary underground, as well as leaflets, manifestos, police and newspaper reports.⁸⁵

Whilst the primary material published during the 1920s is vast, equally large gaps remain that were scarcely filled by the four subsequent editions of Lenin's *Collected Works*, the last of which incorporates some of the material previously released in the *Sbornik*,⁸⁶ and the limited, piecemeal publication of new documents during the Khrushchev, perestroika and post-Soviet periods. In relation to these three 'liberalisations', it is necessary to note that for a whole period, historians and archivists in the Soviet Union was subject to severe political pressure and persecution which somewhat constricted their output.⁸⁷ As for the first of the three 'liberalisations' just

⁸¹ Ibid., viii, 93-360

⁸² Ibid., iii, 50-439

⁸³ GV Plekhanov & PB Aksel'rod, *Perepiska GV Plekhanov i PB Aksel'roda* with notes by PA Berlin, VC Voitinsky & BI Nikolaevskii (The Hague: Europe Printing, 1967)

⁸⁴ PB Aksel'rod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma PB Aksel'roda i Iu O Martova*, with notes by FI Dan, LO Dan & BI Nikolaevskii (Berlin: Russkii Revoliutsionnyi Arkhiv, 1924)

⁸⁵ *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Ispart, 1921-41); *Katorga i Ssylka* (Moscow: Obshchestvo byvshikh politicheskikh katorzhan i ssyl'no poselentsev, 1921-35); *Krasnyi Arkhiv* (Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1966)

⁸⁶ RC Elwood, 'How Complete is Lenin's *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*?' *Slavic Review* 38:1 (Mar. 1979) 97-8

⁸⁷ I Fedorin, 'Tochka zreniia istorika. I s'ezd RSDRP: bor'ba vokrug ego priznanie', *Argumenty i Fakty* 1988: 51 (Dec. 15) 7; Ya G Rokitsanskii, 'Vynuzhdennyi otvet: DV Riazanov protiv 'Komsomolskaia Pravda' 1928g', *Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, (1997: 5-6) 100-110

noted, the re-publication of the minutes of the Second Congress proves to be of particular significance to our study.⁸⁸ However, the authoritative publication of the second period, *Izvestiia TsK* reveals next to nothing on Lenin's early political activity.⁸⁹ The perestroika era discussion of this period seems to be confined to a belated admission that, whilst Soviet historians had a habit of dating the history of 'Bolshevism' and thus the Communist Party from 1903, any serious study of the early years of its formation had to reckon with the five years from 1898-1903, during which revolutionary Marxists played something of a minority opposition role in a broader party, the foundation of which had little to do with Lenin.⁹⁰ As Davies admits, perestroika in fact came very late to the historical profession,⁹¹ one effect of this being that it was not until 1990 that a historical journal is prepared to publish excerpts from the work of such a significant figure as Trotsky.⁹² The Soviet Union was thus already past history well before it became possible to raise the question of other, more minor players in the early development of the RSDLP such as the Bund and the Economist journals *Rabochee Delo* and *Rabochaia Mysl'*. This is despite the fact that a text so prominent as *What Is To Be Done?* is simply littered with references to such publications and the organisations which supported them. Fortunately, partial and in some case complete serials of these publications can still be found.⁹³ Despite this, general awareness of the existence of these documents, still less familiarity with them,

⁸⁸ e.g. *Pervyi s'ezd RSDRP. Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 1958); *Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP. Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959)

⁸⁹ 'C kakogo goda sostoiat v partii VI Lenin?', *Izvestiia Ts K* (1989: 8) 133

⁹⁰ I Fedorin, 'Tochka zreniia istorika', 7

⁹¹ R Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* (London: MacMillan, 1989) 167-8. See also: E Walters, 'View from the Lenin Library. The Changing Shape of Soviet History', *History Workshop* 32 (Autumn 1991) 77-87; J Gooding, 'Lenin in Soviet Politics 1985-91', *Soviet Studies*, 44 : 3 (1992) 403-22; B Williams, *Lenin* (London: Pearson Education, 2000) 1-13

⁹² 'Fragmenty iz knigi LD Trotskogo 'Istoriia russkoi revoliutsii'. Kommentarii NA Vasetskogo', *Istoriia SSSR* (1990 : 4 & 5) 146-64, 135-46

⁹³ Of particular use in locating these newspapers were the following catalogues and the corresponding collections: Hoover Institute and Library of War, Revolution and Peace, *Menshevik Collection of Newspapers, Periodicals Pamphlets and Books Relating to the Menshevik Movement* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institute on War, Revolution and Peace, 1967); KE Carpenter, *Russian Revolutionary Literature Collection*, Houghton Library, Harvard University, (New Haven, Connecticut: Research Publications Inc, 1976)

is fairly low. The translation and re-publication work on the writings of opponents and colleagues of Lenin after the fashion of Taylor, Harding, and Frankel has partially rectified this problem, and the sheer volume of this type material requires further contributions such as these.⁹⁴ Similarly, the series of interviews conducted with former revolutionary activists by Haimson *et al* appears to aid our understanding of the practical activity of various political opponents and less well-known sympathisers of Lenin.⁹⁵

The post-Soviet period has not been without certain positive developments in the field of archive-based publication and commentary, mainly in the Russian language. The emergence of a Martov and a Potresov *Izbrannoe* certainly represents a step forward,⁹⁶ as do the contents of the journal *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* in general.⁹⁷ Apart from these, we should note Urilov's presentation of the correspondence of Potresov and Martov,⁹⁸ which unfortunately does not provide a great deal of material relevant to the present study but which certainly takes forward the study of Menshevism in general. The same can be said of Nenarokov's study of one particular letter between Axelrod and Martov from the twenties.⁹⁹ Despite these contributions, one cannot but sense that the much-anticipated opening of the Soviet archives has yielded little new material in relation to the early period of RSDLP history, particularly in comparison with the Khrushchev era. In fairness it should perhaps be recognised that many historians of Russia probably felt that there were more important issues to address: the civil war, collectivisation, 'dekulakisation', the purges, the mass deportations probably concern both the historical profession and the

⁹⁴ Vladimir Akimov *on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism*, ed. J Frankel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); R Taylor, trans, *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879-1906*, ed. N Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

⁹⁵ L Haimson, Ziva Galili y Garcia, R Wortman, LO Dan, BI Nikolaevsky & G Denike *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

⁹⁶ Iu O Martov *Izbrannoe*, ed. SV Tiutiukin (Moscow, 2000); AN Potresov, *Izbrannoe*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Mosgorarkhiv, 2002)

⁹⁷ *Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, (Moscow: Izd. 'LIT', 1992-present)

⁹⁸ Iu O Martov i AN Potresov *Pis'ma 1898-1913*, edited by I Kh Urilov (Moscow: Sobranie 2007)

⁹⁹ AP Nenarokov, *Istoriia odnogo pis'ma: politicheskoe zaveshchanie Pavla Aksel'roda* (Moscow: Medium, 2008)

reading public rather more than the altogether less emotive subject of the present thesis.¹⁰⁰

On the basis of the documents so far highlighted, a vast number of scholarly monographs have been produced outlining the entire career of Lenin, with relatively few dedicated to a critical analysis of particular episodes in Lenin's political development. This 'biographical' prejudice often produces a relative disregard for the political context in which Lenin operated, the emphasis being on his own personal activity and ideas. Consequently, the thinking and activities of what Lih recently referred to as 'Lenin's significant others'¹⁰¹ and their concrete relations to *Iskra* and Lenin have consequently been unduly ignored to date, a now ubiquitous problem which actually seems to have its root in the rise of Stalinism. This seems clear when we consider one of the earliest accounts of Bolshevik-Communist historical development to go beyond the republication of documents, Zinoviev's *Lectures on the History of the Bolshevik Party*.¹⁰² Whilst a number objections have been justifiably raised against this work as a whole,¹⁰³ it does at least attempt to present to the main ideas of the opponents of Bolshevism, such as the Cadets and the Social-Revolutionaries in a serious fashion, whilst seeking to show how Bolshevik ideas and organisational structures evolved and were clarified as a result of clashes with these political tendencies, and as a result of definite historical events.¹⁰⁴ The gradual emergence of a Bolshevik 'party' out of the RSDLP, and the equally gradual emergence of the RSDLP out of diverse previously existing social-democratic formations is thus recognised.¹⁰⁵ Zinoviev's conclusion is that it is very hard to define when then 'Bolshevik party' was actually founded.¹⁰⁶ By contrast, as Fedorin showed during the perestroika period, this type of 'dialectical' open mindedness concerning the history of Russian social-democracy came to an end in 1928, at which point it was

¹⁰⁰ RW Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* 2-8

¹⁰¹ LT Lih *Lenin Rediscovered* 218

¹⁰² GE Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party - a popular outline*, translated by R Chappell (London: New Park, 1973)

¹⁰³ Ibid., vii-xii

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 8-10, 13-25

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 12-3

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 11-2

decided to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 'Bolshevik Party' despite the fact that the Lenin trend was in no sense a separate 'party' from the Mensheviks as a result of the Second Congress.¹⁰⁷ On the basis of this new convention, an idea appeared which raised Lenin's status to that of founder of a 'party', something which is not really correct. Of particular importance in this connection is the notion that the Second Congress of the RSDLP was in fact its 'founding' congress owing to the meagre practical successes of the First Congress. Krupskaya states precisely this idea in her *Memories of Lenin*¹⁰⁸ but it was in fact firmly rejected at the time by *Iskra* adherents and 'Economists' alike: in fact only the Jewish Bund put forward the argument that the 1903 congress was a founding congress.¹⁰⁹ Developing this notion of Lenin as the founder of all things social-democratic, with its corresponding reduction of all other social-democratic forces to nought, we find in even the most sophisticated post-Lenin Soviet histories the idea that Lenin also conceived the very idea of the *Iskra* newspaper and its supporting faction in Siberian exile.¹¹⁰ In this view it was not the reaction to a definite set of political problems faced by Lenin, so much as the product of a pre-conceived plan that largely disregarded external circumstances. This view is challenged in the second chapter of the study.

One cannot deny that there is a political motivation to the treatment of Lenin we have just described, even if it is beyond the remit of the study to discuss it in detail. We merely note in passing the way in which, on the basis of an acquired indifference to all things relating to the Bund, Economism and Menshevism, the fanciful attribution of all opposition to Lenin to Trotsky¹¹¹ became possible in Soviet literature, something contradicted by any serious study of the relevant primary documents. What is perhaps more interesting is the way in which historians of Lenin in the west have followed the lead given by their Soviet counterparts, despite the occasionally strenuous protests that historians in the two contending political systems

¹⁰⁷ I Fedorin, 'Tochka zreniia istorika', 7

¹⁰⁸ NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 22-3

¹⁰⁹ This question will be addressed in chapters four and five of this thesis.

¹¹⁰ KN Tarnovskii, *Revolutsionnaia mysl'*, *revolutsionnoe delo* 49-60

¹¹¹ e.g. VA Grin'ko. 'Razovlachenie VI Leninym i ego edinomyshlennikami opportunizm Trotskogo na 2 s"ezde RSDRP', *Vtoroi s"ezd RSDRP i mestnye partiinye organisatsii Rossii* (Perm, Permskoe Knizhnoe Izdatelstvo, 1973), 195-207

had absolutely nothing of value to say to one another.¹¹² In fact, the number of English language Lenin historians revealing a credible level of familiarity with the documents of the Bund, *Rabochee Delo*, the Mensheviks and so on is remarkably small in comparison to the numbers who have attempted studies of Lenin without taking into account these political groupings. Whilst such documents do receive a far more serious treatment on the part of those primarily interested in the opposition to Lenin, the latter inevitably treat *Iskra* in a fairly cursory manner, the result being that hardly any historian to date has properly studied the relations between Lenin and his faction on the one hand, and his ideological opponents on the other, with the conscious intention of representing the contrasting political logic of the opposing sides in a remotely even handed fashion. Tobias, in so many ways a remarkable historian of the Bund, simply defers to the controversial judgement of Wolfe when it comes to a discussion of the internal politics of *Iskra*,¹¹³ whilst the treatment of *Iskra* by Baron, Getzler, Frankel and Ascher is hostile, appearing to reiterate without critical scrutiny the opinions of the main subjects of these studies as if their polemical arguments were statements of established fact. As such, they too suffer from the problem inherent in writing biographies of Russian social-democratic leaders: these scarcely produce an all-sided understanding of the development of the RSDLP itself. Therefore from the perspective of the present study it is unfortunate that certain leading historians currently active in the Russian Federation have so self-consciously imitated the aforementioned category of writers, producing biographies of their own on Martov and Plekhanov.¹¹⁴ Where the RSDLP has been the focus of attention in contemporary Russia, it has usually been equated mainly with the Menshevik faction to the exclusion of the Bolsheviks, in a strange mirror image of normal practices in the Soviet era.¹¹⁵

¹¹² L Shapiro 'Lenin After Sixty Years' in *Lenin: The Man, the Theorist, the Leader*, ed. L Shapiro and P Rosta (London: Pall Mall, 1967) 4; J LH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, reprint with corrections (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) vi-vii

¹¹³ HJ Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia from its Origins to 1905* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972) 219

¹¹⁴ e.g. I Kh Urilov, *Iu O Martov - istoriograficheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Nauka, 1995); SV Tiutiukin, *GV Plekhanov: cyd'ba russkogo marksista* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1997)

¹¹⁵ e.g. I Kh Urilov, *Sud'by rossiskoi sotsial-demokratii* (Moscow: RODP 'Sotsial-Demokraty', 1998); I Kh Urilov, *Istoriia rossiskoi sotsial-demokratii (menshevizma)* (Moscow: Sobranie, 2000)

Among those small group of writers in the west who have dedicated themselves to studying the relation between Lenin and the diverse structures and organisations within the RSDLP we should draw particular attention to the work of Keep.¹¹⁶ Keep's work would at first glance appear to set the standard for enquiries into the early history of the RSDLP along with those of Pipes¹¹⁷ and Carter-Elwood,¹¹⁸ which account for the periods immediately preceding and following the one dealt with in the current thesis. More than any other, Keep's monograph attempts to analyse relations within the RSDLP using many of the documents that form the basis of the current study, whilst at the same time aiming to draw general conclusions from these sources.¹¹⁹ It certainly seems to represent a step forward from the thorough and broad-ranging, though essentially descriptive work of Schapiro on Communist Party history.¹²⁰ Unfortunately, much like Wolfe's before him, much of Keep's work is abrasively judgemental in its tone and his treatment of the primary evidence at his command are in no sense vindicated by the present study. Keep's main thesis concerning the period we are studying appears to be that Lenin initiated an aggressive campaign to 'take over' the RSDLP and to reshape and impose on it authoritarian and restrictive organisational principles¹²¹ that would undermine its connections with the broader labour movement¹²² in favour of more 'conspiratorial' methods. The membership of the party was to be entire 'professional',¹²³ a situation only frustrated by Lenin's defeat in the period following the Second Congress. Much of this analysis

¹¹⁶ JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, reprint with corrections (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966)

¹¹⁷ R Pipes, *Social-Democracy and the St Petersburg Labour Movement 1885-97* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963)

¹¹⁸ R Carter Elwood, *Russian Social-Democracy in the Underground: A Study of the RSDRP in the Ukraine 1907-14* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974)

¹¹⁹ i.e. the material from the *Leninskii Sbornik* as well as the fifth edition of Lenin's *Collected Works*; the Plekhanovite, Economist, Bundist, Menshevik and Bolsheviks newspapers and journals such as *Rabotnik* and *Listok Rabotnika*; *Rabochee Delo*, *Iskra*, *Zaria*, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* and *Poslednie Izvestiia*.

¹²⁰ L Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, second edition (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970)

¹²¹ JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia* 59-62, 90-1

¹²² *Ibid.*, 89

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 90-1

appears to be rooted in the Menshevik polemics of the post-Second Congress period, which were later given a questionable veneer of historiographical respectability by social-democratic activists-turned historians such as Theodor Dan.¹²⁴ This apparent influence even extends to the loaded language of some passages in Keep's work.¹²⁵ In the present study we shall show that he simply ignores the dominant position occupied within the RSDLP by a Bund-Economist bloc at the time *Iskra* was created, a bloc which was trying to consolidate a leading position in the RSDLP using similar tactics to Lenin: the organisation of a sovereign RSDLP congress in which their own supporters would have a majority, which would then appoint an official RSDLP leadership. Unfortunately, Keep's emotive language and his selective and distorted use of the evidence at his disposal¹²⁶ is in no sense an isolated incident in the works of the cold war period. Moreover, this feature persists in some more recent studies. The lack of countervailing pressure from Soviet or socialist scholarship permits an entirely hostile tone to permeate at least one recent biography of Lenin.¹²⁷

One remarkable feature of Soviet scholarship generally is the level of detail it provides concerning the Russian *Iskra* organisation, the network of 'agents' operating in Russia as opposed to the newspaper distributed by them. Of particular note in this respect are the work of Pospelov *et al*,¹²⁸ Deich,¹²⁹ Olkhovskii¹³⁰ and Tarnovskii.¹³¹

¹²⁴ T Dan, *The Origins of Bolshevism*, translated by J Carmichael, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964)

¹²⁵ JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia* 59-62: There is not space to quote the passage in full, but the remarks about 'calumny'; how the Economists 'could truthfully reply that they were not traitors to socialism' and Keep's counterposition of 'angry allegations' with 'a dispassionate examination' are particularly eccentric.

¹²⁶ To give but one of several further examples of this, Keep argues that Lenin opposed the 'spontaneity' of the labour movement during the *Iskra* period [Ibid., 89]. In fact, Lenin's stated aim in *What Is To Be Done?* was that spontaneous protest movements should acquire socialist consciousness through contact with a Marxist political organisation. This does not mean that Lenin saw spontaneous movements as a bad thing. It was clearly the organisational weakness of the party that prevented it from introducing socialist and democratic ideas to this spontaneous movement, not a political choice on the part of its leaders [VI Lenin (1960-79) v 373-97].

¹²⁷ R Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2002)

¹²⁸ PN Pospelov et al, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin: biografiia*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe isdatel'stvo politicheskogo literatury, 1963)

In particular, the details of the physical movements of agents, their pseudonyms, codes and addresses are fascinating and a careful study of these works utterly exposes the limitations of those who refuse point-blank to engage with Soviet literature. This method of refusing to read or discuss works written by an author of a differing ideological position to oneself has in fact denied, and continues to deny to English-language scholarship a vast amount of useful information, resulting in a great number of works which deal primarily with Lenin's ideas and main polemical exchanges, without giving any consideration for his more 'practical' activities.¹³² This said, there are certain falsehoods to be found in this group of Soviet studies, including the 'airbrushing' of personalities such as Struve,¹³³ Trotsky¹³⁴ and Parvus¹³⁵ from certain incidents in the Pospelov work. Parvus is at one point replaced by the more politically 'harmless' Clara Zetkin in this work, presumably on the grounds that Parvus was later associated with the 'German gold' thesis, variants of which originated during the July days and which was later resurrected by Volkogonov.¹³⁶ Similarly, we find a distortion in Olkhovskii's article of the facts of Martov's account of *Iskra*'s origin, the author attempting, possibly under editorial or institutional pressure, to use Martov's testimony to show that Lenin had the original idea for *Iskra* during his stay at Shushenskoe.¹³⁷ In fact, as shall be shown in the third chapter of the present study, Martov's account strongly indicates that the idea of *Iskra* was not conceived until the spring of 1900, after the failure of the Smolensk congress attempt. In a related counterfactual statement, Tarnovskii denies that Lenin was ever prepared to accept the editorship of *Rabochaia Gazeta*, when documents exist proving beyond any

¹²⁹ GM Deich, 'Voprosy konspirativnoi tekhniki 'Iskry' v pis'makh VI Lenina 1900-03 godov', *Voprosy Istorii* (1969, 9) 49-66

¹³⁰ E Ia Olkhovskii, 'VI Lenin vo glave 'Iskry'', *Istoriia SSSR* (1974 : 6) 21-35

¹³¹ KN Tarnovskii, *Revolutsionnaia mysl', revolutionnoe delo* (Moscow: Mysl' 1983)

¹³² e.g. L Haimson, *The Russian Marxists & The Origins of Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955); N Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought*; M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*; N Harding, *Leninism*; LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered*, along with the articles of Mayer cited in note 62

¹³³ PN Pospelov et al, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin: biografiia* 72

¹³⁴ Ibid., 93

¹³⁵ Ibid., 76-7

¹³⁶ D Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy*, trans. H Shukman (London: Harper Collins, 1995) 113-28

¹³⁷ E Ia Olkhovskii, 'VI Lenin vo glave 'Iskry'', 23

reasonable doubt that he was.¹³⁸ Apart from these incidents, we have to recognise that these Soviet accounts are essentially descriptive and do not venture to analyse or critically engage with Lenin's tactical thinking, or to develop general conclusions concerning his method of political struggle.

The post-Soviet era has produced a few studies focusing on the period addressed by this thesis, though none of them have addressed the organisational politics of the RSDLP in any depth, at best focusing on some of the general theoretical notions of the contending factions. In the English language, two significant works of this period would appear to be those of Donald and Lih, to be considered along with articles by Mayer.¹³⁹ All these studies support the idea that Lenin was primarily influenced by Kautsky during the *Iskra* period and accordingly give little consideration to the role of either *Osvobozhdenie Truda* or the RSDLP in shaping Lenin's most well-known polemical exchanges of the period. It is no doubt for this reason that they also say little on the organisational strategy Lenin was developing during period 1899-1903. In the case of Mayer and Donald, this leads to the idea that Lenin's notion, stated most clearly in *What Is To Be Done?*, of social-democratic consciousness being introduced to the working class 'from without' was a new departure within Russian social-democracy,¹⁴⁰ whilst Lih develops the argument by tracing this apparently distinctive conception back to Marx and Engels via Kautsky, rather than *Osvobozhdenie Truda*.¹⁴¹ The results of these new departures are, unfortunately, less than satisfactory, in so far as there is simply a silence in them concerning the native revolutionary tradition within Russia. Mayer, Donald and Lih do not so much as deny the influence of Plekhanov and other Russian figures on Lenin: they do not even appear to have considered this angle even though, as has already been shown, there has already been a significant amount of research carried out into the activity, the ideas and the organisation of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and its various Russian satellites. Sadly, their oversight appears to be crucial. Several of the

¹³⁸ KN Tarnovskii, *Revolutionaia mysl', revolutionnoe delo* 60

¹³⁹ M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*; RC Mayer, 'Lenin and the Concept of the Professional Revolutionary'; RC Mayer, 'Lenin, Kautsky and Working Class Consciousness'; RC Mayer 'The Status of a Classic Text: *What Is To Be Done?* After 1902'; LT Lih *Lenin Rediscovered*

¹⁴⁰ RC Mayer, 'The Status of a Classic Text', 309

¹⁴¹ LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered*, 41-158

Taylor-Harding documents clearly show that, contrary to Mayer's claim, *Osvobozhdenie Truda* shared the view of Lenin that the initial bearers of socialist consciousness in Russia would be individual members of the *intelligentsia*. Specifically, for a whole period, *Osvobozhdenie Truda* appears to have believed that committed socialist *intelligents* should have had the aim of recruiting individual workers with the aim of offering them a general education whilst at the same time teaching them revolutionary theories.¹⁴² Moreover, these ideas clearly predate the well-known expression of similar views by Kautsky. The intended result was to have been a 'worker-*intelligentsia*', to use the words of Axelrod, who would form the authentic leadership of a future working class party.¹⁴³ In this sense, Mayer's notion that Lenin's theory of socialist consciousness coming to the working class 'from without' was a new departure in Russian social-democracy appears to be clearly false.

Donald appears to base her argument that Lenin was primarily influenced by Kautsky mainly on the apparently wide circulation of the latter's *Neue Zeit* among Russian social-democrats.¹⁴⁴ Whilst it appears to be true that Kautsky was viewed as a social-democratic authority by Lenin, to the extent that his words are infrequently cited in various programmatic drafts, and of course in *What Is To Be Done?*, the same could be said for a number of other leading social-democratic figures. With this type of reasoning from citations we could easily draw the conclusion that even the leading Menshevik Martov was a significant influence on Lenin, if one of Urilov's articles is to be believed.¹⁴⁵ Naturally, Plekhanov is more commonly viewed as Lenin's intellectual mentor, but it seems that Donald does not wish to discuss or even to acknowledge his influence, seemingly in defiance of a mountain of evidence. This could be because, as Gluckstein points out, her work deals almost exclusively with theoretical questions and has little to say on practical-organisational matters.¹⁴⁶ More problematically still, and in defiance of the evidence presented by Baron and Savel'ev,

¹⁴² A Egorov, 'Zarozhdenie politicheskikh partii i ikh deiatel'nost'', 375-6; NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 6-10; VP Akimov 'A Short History', 235; R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 108

¹⁴³ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 113-9

¹⁴⁴ M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution* 1-15

¹⁴⁵ I Kh Urilov, *Iu O Martov - istoriograficheskii ocherk* 7

¹⁴⁶ D Gluckstein, review of M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*, *Slavic and East European Review*, 72:2 (Apr. 1994) 354-5

Donald insists that *Osvobozhdenie Truda* more or less shared her preferences, refusing to engage in practical work during their long exile. Whilst all would acknowledge that the Plekhanov group's efforts were not crowned with great successes, her assertion that the Plekhanovites were only interested in recruiting intellectuals does not bear critical examination, especially when we consider the activity of the local 'Unions of Struggle' inside Russia and the input of Lenin. Krupskaya's memoirs show that Lenin personally supervised workers' propaganda circles during his period of activity in the St Petersburg movement, and that notable worker-activists such as Babushkin were recruited at this time.¹⁴⁷ A further problem for Donald's thesis of 'Kautskian influence' over Lenin is that, as she acknowledges, Plekhanov and Kautsky had a clear disagreement on the way to deal with the revisionist challenge to Marxism posed by Bernstein. She clearly shows that Plekhanov took a much more intransigent stance than Kautsky was prepared to accept, also pointing out that it was figures on the German 'left', such as Luxembourg and Parvus who eventually pressured Kautsky into making a stand at all against an individual who was also his close friend.¹⁴⁸ Even a cursory examination of his own work during this period shows that, in relation to manifestations of Russian 'revisionism' such as the *Credo* of Prokopovich and Kuskova, Lenin was plainly hostile, which poses the question of whether Donald, whilst noticing certain points in common between the views of Kautsky and Lenin, has failed to identify important differences. Perhaps the most important, in the long term, was Lenin's unique commitment to organising factions within the broader social-democratic party, a habit he may well have learned from Plekhanov, which Kautsky clearly sought to avoid in favour of consensus and compromise.

Lih's examination of Economist literature is clearly the most detailed to date, even if a treatment of the organisational politics underpinning these documents is absent. Clearly seeking to develop the work of Mayer and Donald, Lih argues that there is a common series of assumptions rooted mainly in the Erfurt programme which unites Lenin and a significant proportion of the economists, specifically

¹⁴⁷ NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 82

¹⁴⁸ M Donald, *Marxism and Revolution* 8-15

Rabochee Delo.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, for all his protests against a perceived academic consensus concerning Lenin,¹⁵⁰ his conclusion that the dispute between the *Iskra* supporters and *Rabochee Delo* was an unprincipled 'feud' does not seem to represent a great departure from the type of work he criticises.¹⁵¹ In essence, like Donald, Lih identifies only features which Lenin and his 'significant others' share in common whilst paying little attention to the ideological issues that divide them. Some, but not all of the Erfurt documents are particularly useful to Lih in pursuing this type of argument, as they blur the dividing line between reformist and revolutionary versions of social-democracy. For example, neither the programme nor Kautsky's commentary on it makes reference to the method of obtaining political power, something which in fact produced a rebuke from Engels at the time, who protested that the main demands of the programme were entirely compatible with the existing political order in Germany.¹⁵² Against this, Engels appears to have urged a reconsideration of Marx's criticisms of the earlier Gotha programme, in which the transition from capitalism to communism is described in clear detail.¹⁵³ The absence of any reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Engels argues should take the form of a centralised democratic republic, is an explicit point of difference between Kautsky and Engels.¹⁵⁴ Consequently, Lih's attempt to turn Lenin into a follower of Kautsky appears to rest on extremely selective use of material from the German party. Whatever the case, the overall thesis seems to require further investigation of German social-democratic history. The Erfurt congress and its programme represented the transition of German social-democracy from a 'semi-illegal' position in which the open propagation of its main ideas were viewed as seditious and was punished accordingly as a result of Bismarck's 'Exceptional Law' against the social-democrats, to one of legality.¹⁵⁵ The success of known social-democrats at elections to state institutions such as the Reichstag, not to mention the difficulty of keeping foreign-

¹⁴⁹ LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered* 279-325

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 13-28

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 11, 325

¹⁵² K Marx & F Engels *Collected Works*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart: 1975-2005) xxvii 225- 9

¹⁵³ Ibid., xxiv 76

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., xxvii 228

¹⁵⁵ For details of this period, see VT Lidke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany 1878-90* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966) 70-80

published social-democratic literature out of Germany defeated this law in what was in effect a mass campaign of civil disobedience.¹⁵⁶ The victory of this campaign posed the question of how the party should relate to its new legal status, and whether 'revolutionary' illegal activity of any kind was still necessary. Clearly Engels took the view that it was, whilst Kautsky, presumably in an attempt to appease the right wing of the party was evasive. Such debates of course had minimum relevance to Russia, in so far as there was no question of 'legal activity' for the workers' movement beyond the Zubatov movement, which was regarded by all social-democrats as disingenuous. 'Erfurtian' debates could only emerge following the revolution of 1905-7, after which the presence of a parliament (duma) and the limited toleration of labour movement activity posed once again the question of whether the social-democrats, by adapting their programme could become an entirely legal political formation.

With the discussion of Lenin being so large and wide-ranging, it might at first glance seem impossible to produce something new. The next section shows that this is not the case, and that a series of fairly ubiquitous oversights in previous work actually requires a re-examination of the vast amount of available material related to Lenin and the RSDLP. In studying the past historiography of Lenin, it seems clear that many of the most interesting new departures in the discussion have been driven by an engagement with documents whose existence has been known about often for many decades, but which have been ignored owing to the sheer volume of information available for study or for political reasons, rather than the discovery or publication of new documents from the archives. Very simply, the sheer amount of the latter type of material allows the conclusion that past treatments of it are far from complete, even before the political pressures of the past and present are taken into account. As such, there is plenty of 'mileage' in the study of Lenin yet. The continued publication of sources remains but part of this process, the other being a careful reading of discrete parts of what has already been published, but scarcely studied, in an attempt to make sense of Lenin's life activity.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 81-105

iii) *How the thesis develops previous work*

The aim of this thesis is to present a history of the *Iskra* faction of the RSDLP between the years 1899-1903. This faction included among its personnel the Marxist theoreticians and leaders Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov, Zasulich, whose lives have previously been studied by Baron,¹⁵⁷ Ascher,¹⁵⁸ Getzler¹⁵⁹ and Bergman¹⁶⁰ respectively, not to mention Potresov, who awaits his biographer,¹⁶¹ and Lenin. Alongside these well-known figures we find Trotsky, a figure who has received no little amount of attention to date from historians, Lydia Dan, from whom Haimson extracted remarkable testimony in his 1987 series of interviews,¹⁶² the memoirists Piatnitskii¹⁶³ and Bobrovskaia¹⁶⁴ and a number of individuals, such as I I Radchenko, Nogin, Krasin, Krasikov and Krzhizhanovskii, who went onto carry out significant functions in the early Soviet state. The *Iskra* group is also noteworthy for the significant number of women activists it attracted, including members of Lenin's immediate family, recently the subject of investigation by Turton,¹⁶⁵ not to mention Alexandrova, Halberstadt, Knipovich, Krzhizhanovskaia, LI Radchenko, IG Smidovich and Stassova, most of whom have yet to receive sufficient attention from historians.

¹⁵⁷ SH Baron, *Plekhanov: Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963)

¹⁵⁸ A Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972)

¹⁵⁹ I Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social-Democrat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967)

¹⁶⁰ J Bergman, *Vera Zasulich: A Biography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983)

¹⁶¹ Steps towards this seem likely at the present time if we consider recent publications in the Russian Federation of volumes of Potresov's writings and correspondence: AN Potresov, *Izbrannoe; Iu O Martov i AN Potresov Pis'ma 1898-1913; Iz Arkhivov AN Potresova*, compiled by MV Mikhailova (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2007- present)

¹⁶² LH Haimson et al *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* 46-213

¹⁶³ OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik* (London: Martin Lawrence 1933)

¹⁶⁴ C Bobrovskaia, *Twenty Years in Underground Russia: Memoirs of a Rank and File Bolshevik* (London: Martin Lawrence 1934)

¹⁶⁵ K Turton, *Forgotten Lives: The Role of Lenin's Sisters in the Russian Revolution 1864-1937* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

Despite this remarkable concentration of personalities, each of whom is worthy of study in their own right, to date there does not appear to have been published a history of the *Iskra* faction viewed as an organisation that was driven by definite political principles. Whilst it is true that the political activity of Lenin has certainly not been ignored between the dates that limit this study, and that his general ideas have been the subject of much discussion, the work discussed above has focused to an unusual degree on the main polemical articles of Lenin such as *Where To Begin?* and *What Is To Be Done?*, and Lenin's combative political attitude towards the organised opponents of *Iskra* within the RSDLP, such as the Bund, the Union Abroad and the Southern Union. On the one hand, this can produce what are quite clearly histories of ideas, which either more or less consciously steer clear of the question of organisational politics, as is the case with Harding,¹⁶⁶ or which engage in a rather one-sided manner with this area by rehearsing Menshevik and Economist criticism of Lenin and *Iskra*, whilst failing to sufficiently acknowledge that these criticisms are in no sense statements of fact.¹⁶⁷ Alternatively, we can find quite authoritative, but essentially descriptive works demonstrating familiarity with a significant number - but by no means all - the documents that form the basis of the current study.¹⁶⁸ That is to say, the facts of the factional drama we are to discuss are recorded fairly faithfully - though there are some gaps - but any attempt to identify and evaluate the strategic thinking of significant figures such as Lenin, Martov, Krichevskii of the Union Abroad or Liber of the Bund, is avoided. The present study aims to contribute such an understanding to this field, showing that, contrary to the widespread view that the clashes between *Iskra* and its opponents were nothing but a 'squabble', an unprincipled struggle for status, these clashes were in fact the product of conflicting but well-established political principles and strategies. In contrast to those previous works which, on the basis of precisely this assumption condemn one side or the other, the present one will aim to first of all attempt to identify the different

¹⁶⁶ N Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic Revolution*

¹⁶⁷ e.g. L Haimson, *The Russian Marxists & The Origins of Bolshevism*; J Frankel, 'Economism: A Heresy Exploited'; JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*

¹⁶⁸ L Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*; G Walter *Lénine*, (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1971)

political principles underpinning each group, only then showing how each sought to get the better of the other by means of manoeuvres, alliance-building, hegemonic strategies and the like.

It is true that the organisational politics of the early Russian social-democracy have been covered in some detail in the fairly distant past by Baron, Frankel, Ascher and Tobias in a degree of detail that is scarcely matched by more recent discussions of this question. Moreover, recent Russian historians of Menshevism such as Urilov are quite frank in acknowledging their debt to this generation of western scholars.¹⁶⁹ Their particular strength appears to be the early history of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats, which appears to have been a loosely organised pre-party formation uniting *Osvobozhdenie Truda* with a number of study circles operating in large Russian cities, and not the *Iskra* faction. Nonetheless, we find in the work of Ascher the conception, important from the perspective of this study, that within the Social-Democratic Union, the Plekhanovites were challenged not only by 'Economists' possessed of a gradualist strategy, assuming that working class consciousness proceeded stepwise and that revolutionary slogans could be 'too advanced' for a working class audience, but also an explicitly 'revisionist' tendency, in other words a conscious attack on the ideas of Marx and Engels, ideas concerning which the 'Economists' were largely ignorant or indifferent.¹⁷⁰ This analytical distinction is confirmed and developed in the present study of *Iskra's* politics. Specifically, it can be shown that whilst Lenin was always directly hostile to 'revisionists' such as Kuskova and Prokopovich, he was initially open to the idea of alliances with the Economists of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad. Baron has noted the latter feature of Lenin's thinking in his study of the clash between Lenin and Plekhanov during the summer of 1900, recorded by the former in the unpublished account *How The Spark Was Nearly Extinguished*.¹⁷¹ However, in making the correct observation that Plekhanov's initial hostility to Lenin was based on his much more confrontational attitude to the Union Abroad and the Bund, Baron

¹⁶⁹ e.g. I Kh Urilov, 'Ot kakogo nacidstva otkazatsya', *Mensheviki i Menshevizm: Sbornik Statei* ed I Kh Urilov, VL Telitsyn & SV Tiutiukin (Moscow 1998) 9-23; I Kh Urilov - *Istoriia Rossiiskoi SD (Menshevizma)*, *Chast' 3* (Moscow: Sobranie 2005) 28

¹⁷⁰ A Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism* 154-7

¹⁷¹ SH Baron, *Plekhanov* 209

pays altogether too little attention to an actual meeting between Lenin and these forces in February 1900, an account of which is central to the second chapter of the present work. Whilst briefly acknowledging this meeting's existence, Baron seem to have forgotten about the section of Martov's unpublished manuscript that accounts for Lenin's willingness to accept the post of editor of a revived *Rabochaia Gazeta* at a planned, but unsuccessfully organised Second Congress of the RSDLP, which was to have been held in April of 1900.¹⁷² This overlooked event is significant, in so far as it proves more or less beyond doubt that Lenin did not conceive of *Iskra* in Siberian exile. Other aspects of the document also reveal remarkably democratic sensibilities on the part of Lenin, which we will also have cause to discuss in the next chapter. Apart from this, no previous study seems to have acknowledged the way in which the Economists repeatedly attempted to recruit the group around Lenin in an attempt to draw him away from the Plekhanov circle. Lenin's refusal to trade the editorship of *Rabochaia Gazeta* for links with *Osvobozhdenie Truda* in fact speaks volumes for his attachment to the latter, a factor which once again calls into question parts of those recent studies which try to emphasise a supposed relation between Lenin and Kautsky at Plekhanov's expense. We reject this interpretation, partially on the strength of a further document presented in the next chapter, which we believe has not been studied at all to date, and which illustrates to what degree Kautsky was in fact the guiding theoretical light rather more of *Rabochee Delo* than *Iskra*.¹⁷³

The full implications of Ascher's analysis of the ideological diversity existing within the RSDLP remain to be developed. Specifically, Ascher asserts that Economism and revisionism were finished as political trends by 1900, the time *Iskra* began its struggle with them.¹⁷⁴ This argument has since been echoed by Lih,¹⁷⁵ but in the light of the documents under discussion in this study it does not appear compelling. Ascher admits that the pamphlet *On Agitation*, with its description of gradualist tactics, is a key document of Economism, a view we show in our study to

¹⁷² i.e. *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 49-55; SH Baron, *Plekhanov* 210

¹⁷³ i.e. *Rabochee Delo* 5 (Autumn 1899) 1-2

¹⁷⁴ A Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism* 157

¹⁷⁵ LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered* 218-21

be held by both Plekhanov and the Union Abroad leader Akimov.¹⁷⁶ Yet this very same gradualism we find in Krichevskii's article in the seventh issue of *Rabochee Delo*, published in August of 1900 and in Martynov's lengthy contribution to the debate on the party programme at the Second Congress.¹⁷⁷ Consequently it is a matter of some regret that Lih, in his recent study, whilst giving a detailed account of Krichevskii's article, should try to argue that these views were identical to those advocated by *Iskra*, drawing the conclusion that *Iskra*'s opposition to the Union Abroad and *Rabochee Delo* was spurious in ideological terms.¹⁷⁸ Lih can only do this by excluding *Osvobozhdenie Truda* from his study, and in an attempt to set straight what appears to be a mistake, we have introduced a direct comparison between the programmatic statements of the Plekhanovites and *Rabochee Delo*, the latter of which also does not appear to have received any attention from historians.¹⁷⁹

Having shown in our second chapter that Economism is 'real' and not a politically expedient fantasy on the part of the *Iskra* leadership as Lih and others claim, and that there are three main ideological trends in the social-democracy of the *Iskra* period, in addition to the Jewish nationalism of the Bund, our task is then to examine the evolving relations between *Iskra*, its opponents and the RSDLP as a whole. This implicitly leads to a new challenge to many previous studies, through the way the study draws a distinction between the *Iskra* faction and the RSDLP. Those who focus excessively on *What Is To Be Done?*, indeed using it as a starting point for their investigations into this period, have a tendency to assume that the 'organisation of revolutionaries' to which Lenin refers in this pamphlet equates to 'the party' and that this institution was to be staffed primarily by 'professional revolutionaries'.¹⁸⁰ A

¹⁷⁶ A Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism* 158

¹⁷⁷ BI Krichevskii, 'Ekonomicheskaiia i politicheskaiia bor'ba v rossiiskim rabochim dvizheniem', *Rabochee Delo* 7 (August 1900) 1-22; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress* 140-52

¹⁷⁸ LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered* 294

¹⁷⁹ This said, a translation of the fairly similar revised *Rabochee Delo* programme of February 1902 is to be found in R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents* 268-76

¹⁸⁰ e.g. BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution : A Biographical History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948) 163; J LH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia* 90-1; SH Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* 221; ST Possony *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966) 79; I Getzler, *Martov* 79; A Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism*

serious investigation of the documents of the period shows that this cannot have been the case. Professional revolutionaries who did not work for a living in the conventional sense were indeed a central part of the Russia and émigré *Iskra* networks, though the present study suggests that even among these, several prominent figures such as Plekhanov, Axelrod, Potresov and, in all probability, the Krzhizhanovskies had non-political sources of income. The founding document of the Russian *Iskra* organisation from January 1902 indicates the creation of an *Iskra* central committee of sixteen individuals who were to locate themselves at various points around Russia, and to oversee a process of winning over pre-existing social-democratic 'committees' - the leading local bodies of the RSDLP - to *Iskra* ideas and their absorption into the Russian *Iskra* organisation.¹⁸¹ However, Piatnitskii's memoir makes it quite clear that around each of these central committee agents existed a periphery of volunteers, one of whom was Piatnitskii himself, who helped the agent in the work of transporting and storing illegal literature.¹⁸² As such, even the *Iskra* faction was not exclusively made up of professionals: it contained a recognised rank and file membership. When we then consider that *Iskra* was but one part of an RSDLP also containing the Bund, the Union of Southern Committees, and that fully twenty six local organisations sent delegates to the party's Second Congress, we can see that the traditional western estimate of Lenin's conception of party organisation must be wildly inaccurate. We know that behind each local committee there must have also been a significant rank and file membership, which leads us to the conclusion that thousands of individuals must have considered themselves RSDLP members at this stage, owing to their participation in local networks of social-democratic organisation headed by the local 'committee'. To argue that Lenin was attempting to reduce this membership to a group of a couple of dozen clearly shows a lack of perspective, yet this view does not appear to have been questioned in any recent literature on the subject in either the English or the Russian language.

177; R Service, introduction to VI Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* trans. J Fineberg and G Hanna (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) 32; P Pomper, *Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin: The Intelligentsia and Power* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1990) 74. There does not appear to be a single English language study to date that challenges this near-ubiquitous assumption.

¹⁸¹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 222-3

¹⁸² OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik* 26-33

The fact of *Iskra's* existence as a component part of a larger party is made clear in the second and third chapter of this study. However, this is not the only new conception it intends to bring to the field. These chapters also draw out the democratic aspects of Lenin's organisational method and his willingness not only to fight, but also to co-operate with ideological opponents within the labour movement on specific projects in a tactic that would later be known in the Trotskyist tradition as the 'united front'. The specific project this study is concerned with is, naturally, the reconstruction of the RSDLP, which had been smashed the day after its founding congress and whose component organisations had failed to re-establish its central institutions following this setback. The main documents which show this nuanced strategy include a private letter from Lenin to Krupskaya which shows that it was only after Lenin met with *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and argued with Plekhanov that he began to conceive of the Union Abroad as a stronghold of Economism.¹⁸³ Despite this clear change of opinion, which Baron rather unaccountably dates prior to the meeting with Plekhanov,¹⁸⁴ Lenin did not simply seek out direct, polemical confrontation with the Economists, so much as a organisational fusion between the Plekhanovites and their émigré followers in the 'Revolutionary Organisation *Sotsial-Demokrat*' on the one hand and the Union Abroad on the other, the result being a united 'Foreign Committee of the RSDLP' committed to Plekhanovite ideas. Indeed, the main polemical exchange and ultimate split which put an end to this period, following the failed Zurich 'unity' conference of October 1901 appears to have been the result not so much of the Economism of the Union Abroad, so much as the political inconsistency of the main émigré organisations, which made it difficult to form long-term joint projects. For this reason, Service's remark that *Where To Begin?* was a typical *Iskra* article for this period is inaccurate,¹⁸⁵ just as is the view that *Where To Begin?* is essentially a draft for *What Is To Be Done?*:¹⁸⁶ this argument is based on a selective quotation from Lenin's Preface to the later pamphlet which turns a blind eye to all attempts on the part of *Iskra* to build a united organisation with the Economists

¹⁸³ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 44-7

¹⁸⁴ SH Baron, *Plekhanov* 211

¹⁸⁵ R Service *Lenin: A Political Life, Volume One* 86-7, 213

¹⁸⁶ e.g. RC Mayer 'The Status of a Classic Text', 308

in the period between these two works.¹⁸⁷

Lenin's democratic credentials are championed by Trotskyists and historians from the 'revisionist' school of historiography. These trends will probably find their arguments reinforced by the discussion of a document in the fourth chapter which should really be familiar to all historians of the period, not least because it appears in the Fifth Edition of Lenin's *Collected Works*.¹⁸⁸ This is the letter sent by Lenin to the Belostock conference of March 1902 in which he appeals to the Economists not to convert the meeting into a Second RSDLP Congress, whilst at the same time outlining a much more inclusive, consensual and seemingly democratic method of convening the sovereign institution of the party. The fate of this document, indeed of the Belostock meeting itself within Russian and English language historiography is itself a curiosity, in so far as it was apparently delivered to the meeting by Theodor Dan, at that time an *Iskra* agent but later a Menshevik historian of the Russian Social-Democratic movement.¹⁸⁹ In his own historical work, Dan is strangely quiet about the letter, the delivery of which actually led to his subsequent arrest in Moscow.¹⁹⁰ This could be because its content rather jars with his own assertions concerning Lenin's antipathy to internal party democracy and his alleged preference for introducing a 'state of siege' into the RSDLP, much in line with the Menshevik arguments in the period following the Second Congress.¹⁹¹ Indeed, the general enthusiasm for this view of Lenin has led to some quite eccentric opinions as to the preparatory work towards the Second Congress, despite the fact that all its main details can be gleaned from the minutes of the meeting and the *Collected Works*. Volin's article published for the seventieth anniversary of the Congress stands out in this respect, the author seeming to rely on uncorroborated police intelligence reports of dubious accuracy¹⁹² whilst paying no attention to Lenin's personal correspondence.¹⁹³ Probably the best of the Soviet accounts of this meeting, that of Tarnovskii, has nothing to say on the letter's

¹⁸⁷ i.e. VI Lenin, *Collected Works* v 349

¹⁸⁸ VI Lenin, *Collected Works* vi 97-106

¹⁸⁹ NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 65

¹⁹⁰ T Dan *The Origins of Bolshevism* 234-5

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 238-48

¹⁹² See e.g. *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 62 (1934) 141-5

¹⁹³ Ya P Volin, 'Leninskaia 'Iskra' i podgotovka vtorogo s'ezda RSDRP'

content¹⁹⁴ and the same can be said of the generally conscientious Tobias who, whilst discussing the circumstances of the meeting in sufficient detail is silent on the content of a letter, the existence of which he must have been aware.¹⁹⁵ Whilst it is perhaps beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss why the omission of such a significant piece of evidence should be so widespread, one cannot help but speculate that documents showing Lenin supporting a pluralist, multi-tendency party led with the consent of its component organisations did not fit the politically stereotyped view of him developed in both the capitalist and Stalinist parts of the world, and that the legacy of this political influence remains today.

In fact, it seems that this forgotten document exercised as much influence as *What Is To Be Done?* over the pre-Second Congress period in the RSDLP in so far as it described in detail a strategy for party reunification on an inclusive basis which, in all its main features was actually realised by the organising committee, an *ad hoc* party institution created at Lenin's suggestion by the Belostock meeting. The existence of the organising committee is recognised in some English language and Soviet histories, but its character and history has not been considered in any level of detail.¹⁹⁶ Keep's brief account of its existence remains the most complete and accurate to date, and there is clearly room for its development.¹⁹⁷ In particular, the fourth chapter of the study puts the case, rejected out of hand by Keep, that the second attempt to create an organising committee - the first having been broken up by the police - also accepted the decisions of the Belostock conference and an inter-factional agreement between *Iskra*, the Bund, the Southern Union and the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad as its guiding principles. As such, it challenges Keep's claim that the Pskov meeting represented nothing more than a crude factional takeover of the congress organising process by *Iskra*. In fact, Lenin's letter to the Belostock meeting shows that it was he who first introduced the very idea of an organising committee, as an alternative to hastily organised party meetings involving

¹⁹⁴ KN Tarnovskii, *Revolutsionnaia mysl', revoliutsionnoe delo* 185

¹⁹⁵ HJ Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia* 182-4

¹⁹⁶ We acknowledge, but at the same time reject the eccentric account of Volin, whose claims are in no way supported by the documentary evidence on which the current study is based.

¹⁹⁷ JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia* 109-110

very few representatives from local social-democratic organisations. Its overall purpose was therefore not simply to play for time whilst *Iskra* gathered its forces, but to extend the participation of local organisations in the sovereign body of the RSDLP and to make the party congress more representative, whilst also making the actual process of organising it far more transparent. Thus, if Lenin clearly wanted to maximise *Iskra* influence on the organising committee charged with responsibility of producing an inclusive and legitimate congress, this was not his only imperative during the pre-Second Congress period. Other aims included the reconstruction of central RSDLP institutions so as to give them a far more solid basis in the local organisations, through which the party leadership could be held accountable; the development of a central committee with real links to the localities and capable of operating in illegal conditions; the publication of an ever more regular RSDLP newspaper; and the general recognition of an authoritative party programme. In other words, Lenin aimed at strengthening the RSDLP organisation in a number of ways that were only indirectly related to the question of which faction held the upper hand in the organising committee. Indeed, in all these projects, it seems that he consciously sought to involve representatives of opposing factions rather than to exclude them.

The study of the problems that beset the organising committee's work leads us to the main theme of our penultimate chapter, which deals with the final split in the *Iskra* organisation at the Second Congress. There have been numerous attempts to explain this division, most varieties of which are outlined by Urilov: the desire of Lenin to change the personal composition of the *Iskra* editorial board; a struggle over the composition of the central committee; and a disagreement over the degree to which the RSDLP should have been centralised are the motives he identifies.¹⁹⁸ As well as these we note Getzler's idiosyncratic view that the romantic misfortunes of two *Iskra* agents played a key role in dividing the editorial board: Lenin's indifference to the matter apparently horrified his colleagues, who at this point discovered his fundamental 'amorality'.¹⁹⁹ Happily, recourse to such lurid explanations is not necessary in the present study: this type of explanation is simply one of many which tries to locate the starting point of the split in the editorial board of the *Iskra*

¹⁹⁸ I Kh Urilov, 'Iz istorii raskola RSDRP', *Otechestvennaya Istoriia* (2003: 4) 17

¹⁹⁹ I Getzler, *Martov* 66-7

newspaper rather than in the Russian network of *Iskra* agents. Other, similar explanations draw attention to the frequent tensions between Lenin and Plekhanov in relation to the RSDLP programme, for example, or alternatively to the latter's scepticism towards passages in *What Is To Be Done?* and his personal antipathy towards Trotsky. The obvious problem with them is that the most significant clashes inside the editorial board were between Lenin and Plekhanov, who actually sided with one another against the majority of the editorial board at the Second Congress. Another is that the main political differences between Plekhanov and Lenin do appear to have been resolved well in advance of the Congress.²⁰⁰ Tensions between Lenin and Martov, the leaders of the two *Iskra* subgroups at the meeting are actually quite hard to find in the months leading up to it. However, they are not entirely absent and once identified, can be shown to have a political rather than a personal character. It seems that what Martov and Lenin had in common was their greater involvement not only in the production of the *Iskra* newspaper, but also in the work of *Iskra* networks in Russia and western Europe, from which the rest of the editorial board appeared to have remained comparatively aloof. It seems that separate tactical lines emerged within these networks during the time of the post-Pskov setback, with a section of activists essentially seeking an end to the struggles with the Economists in the localities, whilst the new *Iskra* agents participating in the organising committee demanded an end to polemics on the part of *Iskra* with the Bund. It seems that Martov was persuaded to act as the spokesman for this more conciliatory line at the Second Congress, under the influence of some extremely disruptive rearguard actions on the part of the Bund and Union Abroad delegates. Fearing that the Congress would not complete its work, it seems that Martov, possibly in collaboration with others, consciously formulated a series of compromise formulae which would appease the anti-*Iskra* minority, thus preventing a split in the RSDLP. If this was the case, the attempt was unsuccessful, owing to the withdrawal of the Bund and *Rabochee Delo* delegates from the Second Congress part of the way through its proceedings, and as such it simply added to the split between the *Iskra* supporters on the one hand and the Bund and Union Abroad delegates on the other, a split within the *Iskra* camp.

The conclusion of the work is in part a restatement of the main findings of the

²⁰⁰ See e.g. *Leninskii Sbornik* iv 96-139

previous four chapters, followed by a brief characterisation of the main features of each of the prominent individuals, publications and organisations that feature in the study.

A: The Struggle Between Revolutionary Marxism and Economism

Chapter Two: Autumn 1899-Summer 1900: Ideology

By the end of the nineteenth century Russian social-democracy had established small sympathising groups in several western European cities.²⁰¹ Together, these groups formed the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad which, at the party's First Congress in 1898, was named as the official RSDLP organisation for émigrés. It can be said with certainty that it was not a large association, comprising a mere twenty five individuals on 8th January 1900, and that it added a further ten the following day.²⁰² The organisation was a consequence of *Osvobozhdenie Truda's* break with Russian populism in the early 1880s. This tiny group of Marxists connected to Plekhanov, having themselves sought refuge in Switzerland in the previous half decade, seem to have acquired circles of sympathisers inside Russia as early as 1885, which had access to illegal printing presses and which issued newspapers at irregular intervals.²⁰³ Politically, the members of these Russian groups were not consistent Marxists, and as a result it seems that some sort of division was recognised between *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and the Union.²⁰⁴ This distinction was not a split, so much as a recognition of the Plekhanov group as an allied, sympathetic yet separate entity which would provide a literary service to the broader Union. According to this understanding, the latter would not intervene in the internal matters of the émigré literary group, which would make its editorial decisions independent of its activist supporters, and would not be accountable to them.²⁰⁵ Thus a type of federal relationship was established between the two organisations, neither side of which could exert much influence over its opposite number.

There is no evidence that this original 'Union of Russian Social Democrats'

²⁰¹ Places of settlement during this time included: Geneva, Berlin, Zurich, Paris and Liege. [*Leninskii Sbornik*, iii 58-9; GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, xii 495-6; *Sotsial-demokraticheskoe dvizhenie*, edited by AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii (The Hague: Europe Printing, 1967) i 278, 281, 287, 294-6] See also: PS Savel'ev, 'GV Plekhanov i zagranichnyi soiuz russkikh sotsial-demokratov,' 51-9 for a useful account of the emigre politics of this period.

²⁰² AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-demokraticheskoe dvizhenie*, i 287-8

²⁰³ T Dan *The Origins of Bolshevism*, 187; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 232, 285

²⁰⁴ GV Plekhanov & PB Axelrod, *Perepiska*, i 273; R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 74-80

²⁰⁵ GV Plekhanov & PB Axelrod, *Perepiska*, i 273-4

was continuously active right up to the period studied in the present thesis. However, it is clear that a visit by Lenin and several other leading Russian activists to the Plekhanov group in 1895 laid the basis for a rejuvenated 'Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad'.²⁰⁶ Following these negotiations, *Osvobozhdenie Truda* renewed its efforts to produce material for a Russian readership, in the form of the analytical journal *Rabotnik*, and a newspaper *Listok Rabotnika*,²⁰⁷ and it was probably as a result of this renewed activity that the Union was declared an official part of the RSDLP three years later. Lenin's intervention apparently also led to certain changes in its internal structure, the most important of which was that any member of a local committee of the RSDLP who found him or herself living abroad automatically became a member of the Union.²⁰⁸ This meant that whereas previously the organisation's literary activity had been carried out exclusively under the authority of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, there was now pressure on the Plekhanov group to accept offers of collaboration from émigrés who did not share their views.²⁰⁹ Earlier, *Osvobozhdenie Truda* had tolerated politically nebulous followers to some degree, but after the change there appears to have been the expectation, if not the requirement that they co-operate with all émigrés who had played a significant role in the Russian social-democratic movement.²¹⁰ This led to a fear on the part of the Plekhanovites that Union literature would lose its Marxist character owing to the influx of new members who did not share their world view, but who would have the right to be involved in

²⁰⁶ Ibid., i 265-75

²⁰⁷ *Rabotnik* was a thick booklet-sized journal of several hundred pages which appeared six times between 1896-9. Its first section was made up of long analytical articles, each of which often covered tens of pages, and which sometimes had to be spread over two issues. These were accompanied by a second section that was given over to reports from the workers movement in both Russian and European cities, of a somewhat shorter length. The final 'double issue' (i.e. issues 5 & 6) reached over three hundred pages in length. The *Listok* ('supplement') was a much shorter affair, resembling a pocket sized pamphlet of around twenty pages, mainly dedicated to reportage and factual information, especially concerning strikes and other worker rebellions.

²⁰⁸ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-demokraticheskoe dvizhenie* i 289; R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 226

²⁰⁹ VP Akimov, 'Report of the Delegation of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats to the Second Congress of the RSDLP' in *Vladimir Akimov on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism*, 183

²¹⁰ GV Plekhanov & PB Axelrod, *Perepiska*, i 182 ii 5-18; VP Akimov, 'Report', 183

the Union's publishing work.²¹¹ As a result of these pressures Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich resigned their literary responsibilities at the Union's First Congress, which was held in the autumn of 1898, owing to their now obvious status as a minority in the organisation.²¹² A period of internal conflict followed in which the more long-standing members, who generally followed Plekhanov, fell out with the newer members who had joined as a result of their activity in the RSDLP in Russia. The following April, a new journal *Rabochee Delo* appeared in the name of the Union Abroad, consolidating the position of the anti-Plekhanov trend.²¹³ *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and its followers responded by applying for factional status inside the émigré organisation, apparently seeking a return to the old federal-style relations during the latter half of 1899.²¹⁴ Failing to find their demands satisfied, and after months of acrimony, they finally split from the Union Abroad in the spring of 1900, at the latter's Second Congress.²¹⁵

The relation of all this to Lenin is that, despite his fairly clear Plekhanovite sympathies, he appears to have been viewed as a potential collaborator on journalistic projects by individuals linked to the dominant, anti-Plekhanov tendency in the Union Abroad.²¹⁶ One consequence of this was that he was drawn into the conflict just described, seemingly against his will. The purpose of the next two chapters is to analyse Lenin's involvement in this little-studied drama, which dominated the political environment in which he conceived the idea of *Iskra*. In relation to it, the present study revolves around two main arguments. Firstly, the study aims to show that the existence of this conflict in the Union Abroad and the fact of Lenin's

²¹¹ GV Plekhanov & PB Axelrod, *Perepiska*, ii 32-43

²¹² *Ibid.*, ii 52, 54n, 62-3

²¹³ *Rabochee Delo* was a thick booklet-sized journal usually of around one hundred and fifty pages. Most issues began with two or three fairly lengthy analytical monographs, some dedicated to an aspect of current affairs whilst others were clearly polemical. There was lots of correspondence and reports about developments in the Russian workers' and opposition movements, and also reports of developments in foreign workers' organisation. These were largely descriptive, rather than analytical. The *Listok* was similar in format to the *Listok Rabotnika*, but was on occasions used as a vehicle for editorial statements. Twelve issues of the journal and six of the newspaper appeared at irregular intervals between April 1899 and February 1902.

²¹⁴ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-demokraticheskoe dvizhenie* i 279-80

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, i 277-315

²¹⁶ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 51-2; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, ii 129-266, 235-458; iv 13-45 207-9

participation in it disproves the widely held view that the latter emerged into western Europe in the spring of 1900 with a definite plan for the reconstruction of the leaderless RSDLP, involving the *Iskra* newspaper, its theoretical sibling *Zaria*, and its corps of underground agents who would smuggle these publications into Russia.²¹⁷ Whilst acknowledging that it is usually difficult to determine a historical figure's intentions unless they put their thoughts to paper, it seems highly unlikely that Lenin could have had such a pre-conceived and highly-developed plan in the context of such unstable political relations within the emigration. Our second argument relates to the fact this 'instability' consisted in Lenin's closest allies, *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, fighting an ideological battle with an apparently non-Marxist social-democratic trend in the Union Abroad, represented by *Rabochee Delo*. In this struggle Lenin was in principle on the side of the former and against the latter in the sense that he agreed with all the essentials of Plekhanov's political outlook. On the other hand it was the non-Marxists and not the Plekhanovites who appeared the more committed to the reconstruction and development of the RSDLP, and who had far closer links with the workers' movement in Russia.²¹⁸ The question of whose side Lenin was actually on was therefore not entirely clear-cut. By conviction, he was with *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, yet his activist outlook, and his desire to link the theory of Marxism to the actual struggles of the working class appears to have drawn him towards the non-Marxists. The result appears to have been something of a compromise position on his part, albeit one leading more towards the Plekhanovites than *Rabochee Delo*. It seems that it was this compromising policy which actually produced the *Iskra* newspaper as an entity separate from *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, despite the fact that the latter contributed to the columns of the paper on a regular basis. On this basis Lenin could attempt to heal the split in the emigration, the purpose of this being to assert a claim on the part of the revolutionary Marxists to the RSDLP, which was currently in the hands of the Economists, rather than to resolve the ideological conflict between Plekhanov and *Rabochee Delo*. Only having manoeuvred the revolutionaries into the ranks of this broader party could Lenin then pursue a more aggressive strategy against the

²¹⁷ PN Pospelov et al, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, 72-4; J.L.H. Keep *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 67-8; L. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 37

²¹⁸ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 51-2; VI Lenin *Collected Works*, iv 207-9; AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-demokraticheskoe dvizhenie i* 316-22

Rabochee Delo reformists.

These two arguments do not correspond to the division of this section of the study into two chapters. On the contrary, the present one aims to prove that there actually was a meaningful ideological distinction between *Osvobohdeniye Truda* and *Rabochee Delo* and to show that the latter attempted to manoeuvre against the former using Lenin as a pawn. It will show how Lenin and his allies in Russia rebelled against this treatment and struck a blow against *Rabochee Delo* on behalf of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, an incident which offers convincing practical demonstration of Lenin's fundamental loyalties at this stage. In the light of the unavoidable conclusion that Lenin was at this stage a Plekhanovite who actively sought to overcome the influence of anti-Marxist thought in the social-democratic movement, the next task will be to examine how his tactical notions differed from, and were in fact far more effective than that of Plekhanov. This will be the theme of the next, and not the present chapter.

i) Two Contrasting Programmes

A useful starting point for any discussion of the background to *Iskra* is the posing of the question of what is to be understood by the concept 'Russian Marxism'. The beginning of an equally useful answer would be that some of the most clear and concise summaries of the Marxist world view, at least in relation to the period of history currently being studied, are to be found in the programmes of different social-democratic parties and pre-party groupings.²¹⁹ Much can be learned about the nature and function of this type of document from Engels's remarks on the programme drafted by Kautsky for the German social-democrats in 1891.²²⁰ For Engels a programme summarizes in the briefest possible way the theoretical positions and aims of the party. It does not attempt to explain or justify them, and it is not written in a way that is designed to immediately convince the layperson. For these reasons Engels

²¹⁹ B Russell, *German Social-Democracy*, (London: Longman Green, 1896) 137-41; GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, ii 357-62; *Leninskii Sbornik*, ii 161-70; K Marx & F Engels, *Collected Works*, xxiv 75-99

²²⁰ K Marx & F Engels *Collected Works*, xxvii 219-32

criticises Kautsky's efforts:

In general it suffers from the attempt to combine two things that are uncombinable: a programme and a commentary on the programme as well. The fear that a short, pointed exposition would not be intelligible enough has caused explanations to be added, which make it verbose and drawn out. To my view the programme should be as short and precise as possible. No harm is done even if it contains the occasional foreign word, or a sentence whose full significance cannot be understood at first sight.²²¹

This is because it is the basis for political education within the party and its contents should be discussed by workers, guided by theoretically competent teachers:

Verbal exposition at meetings and written commentaries in the press take care of all that and the short, precise phrase, once understood, takes root in the memory, and becomes a slogan, a thing that never happens with verbose explanations. Too much should not be sacrificed for the sake of popularity, and the mental ability and educational level of our workers should not be underestimated. They have understood much more difficult things than the shortest, most concise programme can offer them; and if the period of the Anti-Socialist Law has made more difficult, and here and there even prevented the spreading of comprehensive knowledge among the masses joining the movement, now that our propagandist literature can again be kept and read without risking trouble, time lost under the old leadership shall soon be made up for²²²

Seemingly the role of the teacher-propagandist is to lead doubters towards the appropriate theoretical conclusions, and clear up any misunderstandings with independent commentary and examples. In one sense, then, the programme can be

²²¹ Ibid., xxvii 219-20

²²² Ibid., xxvii 220. Incidentally, we have rearranged the word order of the last clause in this excerpt because its exceptionally poor word order in the translation we are using makes this part of the passage incomprehensible. The original reads 'lost time will soon be made up for under the old leadership'. In our rewording, it would seem that the 'old leadership' refers to either Bismarck or the old regime inside the SDP, whose character was shaped by the Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law: which it does not really matter. The alternative possibility is that Engels wrote 'old' instead of 'new' in a fit of absent-mindedness. Unfortunately, we do not know German and so are unable to provide the original to confirm this idea.

viewed as an educational curriculum for party members in which the basic tenets of the social-democratic world view and its aims are stated. However, and most fortunately for the present study, it also clearly provides answers the question 'what is Russian Marxism' quite convincingly in no more than a couple of dozen paragraphs, allowing us to avoid unnecessary speculation on this score. Bearing this in mind, the next stage of the study will be to examine the programmatic statements of the two sides in the disagreement within the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and try to identify the nature of their political positions and the differences in their political perspectives.

On the one hand there is Plekhanov's programme of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*.²²³ It states that the aim of the group is to spread socialist ideas in Russia and to work towards the construction of a worker's socialist party.²²⁴ It then defines what it understands by a socialist outlook: support for the common ownership of the 'means and products of production'.²²⁵ This type of arrangement it believes is not only possible on the basis of advanced technology, but necessary and inevitable, in the sense that it will solve all the main problems inherent in the current social system and permit the further development of humanity.²²⁶ These problems can be summarised as the class polarisation of society; the principle of competition, which exists between individuals and entire nations; and the state, the product of these antagonisms.²²⁷ Common ownership, states the programme, will have the advantage of transforming all social and international relationships, so that producers will at last have real control over their products. It will represent an end to the rule of blind economic forces in society, with the effect that producers will for the first time in history be able

²²³ GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, ii 357-62

²²⁴ «Группа «Освобождение труда» задается целью пропаганды социалистических идей в России и выработки элементов для организации русской рабочей *социалистической партии*» [Ibid., ii 357]

²²⁵ Ibid., ii 357

²²⁶ «Экономическое освобождение рабочего класса будет достигнуто лишь путем перехода в коллективную собственность трудящихся всех средств и продуктов производства...» [Ibid., ii 357]

²²⁷ Ibid., ii 357-8

to play a part in 'the direct management of all social matters'.²²⁸ A workers' party must be formed in order to achieve this. It must set itself the aim of winning political power in Russia, and of adapting the principles of socialism to the country's unusually backward social conditions. This, according to the programme, does not represent an attempt to change these principles, which it regards as universally applicable given the international nature of the whole modern economy. On the contrary, Marxism states that in every country the workers will have to win dominance over the bourgeoisie in different ways, differences which take into account national peculiarities.²²⁹ Thus, in every country the socialist revolution will take a different form even if socialism itself will be an international system. In Russia, the workers must fight not only the bourgeoisie, but also survivals from pre-bourgeois social system, such as the remnants of landlordism and serfdom.²³⁰ Moreover, the Russian bourgeoisie is not as politically conscious as in the west, with the effect that an alternative force, the 'socialist intelligentsia' has taken up the vanguard position against the autocracy.²³¹ Having noted these special features, Plekhanov then defines the main practical task of these socialists as achieving a democratic constitution, whilst at the same time preparing the working class for participation in this future democratic political system.²³² The preparation of the working class involves the creation of a 'secret' workers political party based in the industrial centres, which will work out a 'social and political programme' representing the aspirations and needs of workers in dialogue with the workers themselves.²³³ Therefore, the programme appeals to the socialist intelligentsia to go to the working class and to begin this work

²²⁸ «...непосредственное участие граждан в заведовании всеми общественными делами...»

[Ibid., ii 358]

²²⁹ Ibid., ii 359

²³⁰ Ibid., ii 359

²³¹ «Одном из вреднейших следствий этого остального состояния производства было и есть до сих пор неразвитое состояние среднего класса, который не способен у нас взять на себя *инициативу* борьбы с абсолютизмом. Социалистической интеллигенции пришлось поэтому стать во главе современного освободительного движения» [Ibid., ii 359]

²³² Ibid., ii 360

²³³ «Социалистическая интеллигенция ... должна *немедленно* *взяться за организацию* рабочих наших промышленных центров, ... в связанные между собою тайные кружки с определенной социально-политической программой» [Ibid., ii 360-1]

of propagating socialist ideas.²³⁴ Those currently attached to the *Narodnaia Volia* organisation or working among the peasantry are not asked to surrender their views, in as much as their democratic aims are shared by the Marxists. However, Plekhanov demands that they supplement their anti-autocratic terror and rural campaigns with constructive work towards the creation of a new urban workers' socialist party.²³⁵

The opposing half of the dispute, the *Programme of Rabochee Delo* is not well drafted and is characterised by vague, contradictory and at times incomprehensible phrases, all of which makes a clear understanding of it quite difficult.²³⁶ In its own words, it is 'based on the soil of international socialism'.²³⁷ Its authors also observe that 'the principles of scientific socialism' only have a purpose if they are related to the 'concrete conditions of the social classes in Russia and the immediate demands of the Russian workers' movement at its current level of development'.²³⁸ The need to consider the differing degrees of political development of workers in different localities is also explicitly stated.²³⁹ Because in Marx's view the emancipation of the working class must be carried out by the workers themselves, the *Programme's* authors declare that the Russian social-democrats must take the mass movement of industrial workers during the previous period as its starting point. It must convert this 'mass' movement into a 'class' movement by putting forward demands which do not appeal to just one or several sections of the working class, but to the working class as a whole.²⁴⁰ *Rabochee Delo* states that working class unification along these lines is

²³⁴ Ibid., ii 360-1

²³⁵ Ibid., ii 361-2

²³⁶ *Rabochee Delo* 1 (April 1899), 1-7

²³⁷ «...на почве международного социализма...» [Ibid., 1]

²³⁸ «Заграничный Союз Русских Социалдемократов действует на почве международного социализма, в идейном и практическом согласии с Российской Социалдемократической Рабочей Партии, часть которой он составляет. Эта деятельность может быть целесообразна лишь под условием, если она, во 1-х руководствуется не только общими принципами научного социализма, но и конкретным соотношением общественных классов в России и насущными потребностями русского рабочего движения.» [Ibid., 1]

²³⁹ Ibid., 1

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 2

taking place naturally, and that the social-democrats should intervene to speed it up.²⁴¹ It predicts that this emerging class movement will inevitably become politicised as a result of clashes with the police, events which will cause workers to ask questions about the nature of the state. With this process in mind, the programme states that 'the political struggle of the working class is only a more developed, broad and effective form of economic struggle'.²⁴² Its authors thus seem to assume that the great majority of workers will develop political consciousness only through the experience of economic struggle. Arrests, police and military attacks on strikers, followed by exiles and trials will reveal the oppressive character of the state and will draw the attention of the greatest possible number of workers towards political problems.²⁴³ For these reasons, *Rabochee Delo* states that political agitation²⁴⁴ should begin with an emphasis on individual freedoms, such as freedom of association, freedom of the press and inviolability of the person, though how agitational work should be developed after this starting point is not made clear.²⁴⁵ From the context, one can guess that *Rabochee Delo* believes that workers who suffer state repression are radicalised, to the extent that they are taught in a very practical way that the entire state machine is opposed to their interests, and that it must therefore be replaced by some other arrangement. In terms of the overall goal of the labour movement, the programme states its support for the RSDLP manifesto and the aim of a socialist society, which is understood in accordance with a Marxist, as opposed to a populist definition of the term.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ Ibid., 2

²⁴² Ibid., 3 «Политическая борьба рабочего класса есть лишь наиболее развитая широкая и действительная форма экономической борьбы.»

²⁴³ Ibid., 4

²⁴⁴ Plekhanov uses the term 'propaganda' to mean methods of teaching the entire Marxist world view to a limited number of individuals in private, but 'agitation' to mean the public promotion of just one or a few Marxist ideas appropriate to a definite situation to the largest audience possible. In this sense propaganda is but a means to effective agitation on the grounds that it is the masses and not a few enlightened individuals who change history [R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 103-4]. This definition of these two terms appears to have been generally accepted in the Russian social-democratic movement at the time we are studying, and we therefore use the words in the sense defined by Plekhanov, which are devoid of any negative connotation attached to the word in contemporary English.

²⁴⁵ *Rabochee Delo* 1 (April 1899), 3

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 5

Rabochee Delo thus registers its opposition to socialists who are not social-democrats; that it will critically evaluate their ideas without being uncomradely in its methods;²⁴⁷ and that it will point out that non-socialist revolutionaries and opposition groups represent social forces other than the proletariat.²⁴⁸ In addition, towards the end of the programme there are also statements in support of the right of stateless nations to self-determination and a statement in opposition to national and religious persecution, reflecting somewhat indirectly the democratic aspirations of the social-democracy and, one might reasonably guess its sympathy with the Jewish Bund.²⁴⁹

Comparing the two documents, it seems clear that Plekhanov's priority is to define his notion of *socialism* very clearly. A socialist society is characterised by common ownership of property and collective management in all social spheres. It proclaims the solidarity of all nations with one another. Only from this revolutionary starting point is the reader is brought back to the difficult realities of Russia, the main features of which are then enumerated. The final goal is articulated, the current situation is then described and finally, resolving the contradictions between the two, a strategy for reaching the goal is outlined. The strategy is to fight for a democratic constitution whilst building an underground socialist workers' party. Conversely, the starting point of the *Rabochee Delo* programme is very clearly the Russian strike wave of 1894-7: current affairs rather than the society of the future.²⁵⁰ Though this event is somewhat beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that social-democrats found it possible to play an influential role in these strikes, but often did not have the opportunity to propagate a Marxist world view. Tactics revolved around helping workers formulate their immediate demands, which were not generally

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 6 « Что касается существующих в настоящее время других социалистических течений, то в своей пресс Союз будет оценивать критически их программы и тактики с социалдемократической точки зрения, строго воздерживаясь от резких, нетоварищеских приемов полемики...»

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 5-6

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 6

²⁵⁰ D Kol'tsov, 'Rabochie v 1890-1904', in L Martov, P Maslov & A Potresov (editors) *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii*, (The Hague: Europe Printing, 1968) 188-93; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 237-54; R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 15-219. Kol'tsov dates the wave from 1895-8, but is clearly referring to the same movement.

incompatible with either capitalism or the autocracy.²⁵¹ As a result there was a doubt on the part of the older generation of social-democrats as to whether, on its own, this type of activity was sufficient for a genuinely social-democratic movement which aimed in principle at the creation of an entirely different, socialist society.²⁵²

For these reasons, *Rabochee Delo*'s emphasis on the industrial movement does seem to indicate a rather superficial attachment to the ideas of socialism and democracy. Perhaps in an attempt to reinforce its commitment to these ideas, *Rabochee Delo* states its support for the 1898 *Manifesto of the RSDLP* which can appear to be a more definitely socialist basis for its actions.²⁵³ Yet this *Manifesto* was in no sense a statement of Marxist principles comparable to that of the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* programme. It begins with a summary of the class relations within Russia and the political consciousness of each class, and the relation of the contemporary situation in Russia to the broad sweep of European history.²⁵⁴ Clearly this analysis reflects certain Marxist assumptions, but nowhere is the basis of a Marxist world view articulated directly: nothing precise is said about the basic features of capitalism, independent of time or place, about the nature of socialism or the means of reaching this desired state. At best, the *Manifesto* states the main *immediate task* of the party, namely the fight for political freedom.²⁵⁵ It also points out that it is but a step towards a new struggle, this time with the bourgeoisie, for 'socialism', but the character of this new type of society remains entirely unexplained.²⁵⁶ It seems that it is because of this fundamental vagueness that *Rabochee Delo*'s prefers its political proposals to be defined by 'the level of development of the workers' movement' rather than their

²⁵¹ A Egorov, 'Zarozhdenie politicheskikh partii i ikh deyatelnost' 379: «(К) концу 90-х годов члены социал-демократических организаций все более сосредоточивали свое внимание на самом процессе повседневной экономической борьбы рабочих с хозяевами, упуская из поле зрения всю социал-политическую обстановку, в которой эта борьба происходила – все те другие общественные противоречия, которые, рано или поздно, должны были вовлечь в сферу своего действия и рабочие массы.» See also R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 15-220 for documents relating to this period in Russian social-democratic history

²⁵² A Egorov, 'Zarozhdenie politicheskikh partii', 381

²⁵³ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 223-6

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 223

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 224

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 224

relation to the final goal of this movement. These proposals are thus clearly viewed as an expression of present day reality rather than part of a strategy leading to a goal. Consequently, one gets the sense that *Rabochee Delo* sees the strike movement as a rather more solid 'material' base for their political strategy than their grasp of 'abstract' Marxist principles could ever provide. Whatever the case, *Rabochee Delo's* immediate political demands are not 'a democratic constitution', but a few key democratic rights that in themselves are not incompatible with continued monarchical rule, albeit in a somewhat less absolute manner. These are: the freedom of association, press and to strike, buttressed by a guarantees of the inviolability of the individual.²⁵⁷ 'Full popular participation in the running of the state'²⁵⁸ is supported as an overall 'aim', whereas for Plekhanov, the overall 'aim' is a socialist society on an international scale. In Plekhanov's 'final goal' the people 'participate' in the management of all areas of society, economic and cultural, and there is no state whatsoever. Democracy, for him is a necessary means to this end, and this is why it is represented as an 'immediate demand'. To reject this 'immediate demand' as too ambitious is, of course, to implicitly reject the final goal for exactly the same reason. Yet this is precisely what *Rabochee Delo* appears to do, despite the fact that without democracy, any progress in the construction of a mass-membership workers' party would be extremely limited.

In so far as *Rabochee Delo* mentions the principles of Marxism, 'scientific socialism', at all it is only to state that they must be compounded with 'the demands of the workers' and yet more bizarrely, 'the concrete social relations of the social classes in Russia.' The latter is an amazingly confused formulation, for it is impossible to imagine how a 'scientific socialist' could establish these 'concrete' relations of the classes except by applying the general principles of the Marxist methodology - however one chooses to define these - to the concrete case. If in general, one accepts that classes in society are defined in their relations to one another by their relations to the means of production, then surely the class structure of Russian society must be determined in exactly the same way. The challenge is then to identify the economic relations prevailing in Russia on the basis of empirical research, and

²⁵⁷ *Rabochee Delo* 1 (April 1899) 3

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3

from this information, to establish the socio-economic character of its rich and poor.²⁵⁹ More to the point, one wonders why *Rabochee Delo* raises the question of scientific socialism only to point out what it believes to be its limitations and, moreover, why it does this whilst failing to state any of the doctrine's basic ideas. One can reasonably assume, in the light of the history outlined above, that a difference of opinion with the Plekhanovites is being expressed, but this negative hint about Marxism is not developed in any detail. There is no explanation of *how*, for example, a struggle for a reduction in the working day without loss of pay could modify the belief that socialism consists in common ownership and a planned economy or that capitalism inevitably causes the polarisation of classes. The silence could be because these notions are absurd, and because they reflect a very weak attachment to political and sociological theories, which are not generally modified by such commonplace events as strikes. Equally, it could suggest a rather superficial familiarity with the ideas of Marx and Engels. Perhaps significantly, circumstantial evidence supporting the latter idea is not hard to find. In fact, a number of contemporary witnesses, Krupskaya, Lydia Dan, Martov and the former *Iuzhny Rabochii* editor Egorov all testify to this.²⁶⁰ They all state that because of Tsarist censorship, the availability of Marxist literature was extremely limited among Russian activists at this time, with only the briefly-legalised first volume of *Capital* being widely read. Even the *Communist Manifesto* was a rarity, and even after the revitalisation of the Union Abroad, the supply of illegal literature and authoritative Marxist opinion was extremely inconsistent.²⁶¹ Worse, within the universities during the 1890s, 'Legal Marxism', the bowdlerized study of Marx carried out within the limits permitted by the censorship, had become something of a mass phenomenon, especially in the wake of the famine crisis of 1891-2.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ In the view of Marx, a key part of this type of work was carried out by one N Flerovsky who, though not a revolutionary gave Marx the basic information necessary to formulate his position on the nature of Russian social relations [K Marx & F Engels *Collected Works*, xliii 422-5].

²⁶⁰ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 2; A Egorov, 'Zarozhdenie politicheskikh partii', 380; Iu O Martov, *Zapiski Sotsial-Demokrata*, (Oriental Research Partners, 1975), 69; LH Haimson et al *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, 78-79

²⁶¹ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 1-2

²⁶² LH Haimson et al, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, 75

If the hypothesis that, for *Rabochee Delo* 'scientific socialism' or 'Marxism' equates precisely to *Capital, Volume One* and to nothing else is allowed, it is at least possible to make sense of what it writes in its programme. According to this interpretation, scientific socialism, in the view of *Rabochee Delo*, is one part of the economic theory of Marx alone, and not the whole complex of the political, economic, organisational and philosophical theories advanced by both Marx and Engels. Naturally, a political movement cannot survive on the basis of propagating such an economic theory alone, and in order to be applicable to Russia, the work in question would need to be supplemented and altered in several different ways. *Capital, Volume One* is based on an analysis of English conditions. In this first volume, the main focus is the relations of industrial workers to their employers: very little is said about other classes in society. By contrast, in Russia there was a large peasantry and the rural gentry to consider. This type of reasoning appears to explain the remark about the 'concrete social relations of classes' and the desire of *Rabochee Delo* to supplement Marxism in different ways. The concept of parliamentary investigations into industrial conditions, Blue Books and Hansard - staple evidence in *Capital, Volume One* - would no doubt seem very alien to Russian situation, prompting *Rabochee Delo*'s appeal to consider the working class in its 'current state of development'. Thus we are led to the likely conclusion that the basic ideological differences between the two tendencies in the Union Abroad were based on very different levels of familiarity with Marxist literature. Scientific socialism, for *Rabochee Delo* was an economic theory mainly applicable to England whereas Marxism for Plekhanov was a universal revolutionary doctrine.

ii) *Lenin and Rabochee Delo*

If the argument just advanced is correct, it is correct to say that there was always potential for conflict between *Rabochee Delo* and the supporters of Plekhanov. It is hard to imagine how a group with a revolutionary, democratic and socialist conception of Marxism could long be obliged to co-exist with one for whom 'Marxism' was nothing more than the economic theory of *Capital*, a work which has very little to say on the theme of political action. Even though both might have

claimed to subscribe to some kind of 'Marxist' viewpoint, two such groups would in reality have very little in common. As we noted earlier, such a conflict did indeed break out between the two sides in the spring of 1899, a conflict which dragged in the exiled Lenin and in which *Rabochee Delo* appears to have been the aggressor. It emerged in the following fashion. In the first issue of *Rabochee Delo*, as well as the programme we have just discussed, there was a review of Lenin's *The Tasks of the Social Democrats*, a pamphlet published with a foreword by the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* member PB Axelrod.²⁶³ The treatment this work receives from the anonymous reviewer is rather strange, in so far as the latter sees it as proof that within Russia there is no evidence of 'economic one-sidedness' among activists, a criticism made by *Osvobozhdenie Truda* of the social-democrats' intervention in the 1894-7 strike movement.²⁶⁴ This is on the grounds that Lenin identifies both political and economic propaganda and agitation as the essential 'tasks' of the party.²⁶⁵ Consequently, the review is partially positive in tone:

Эта брошюра, написанная действовавшим в России за последние годы товарищем, оставляет крайне отрадное явление. Она свидетельствует о том, что наши российские товарищи переросли уже как предварительную ступень отвлеченной пропаганды социал-демократических принципов, так и дальнейшую ступень - процесс слияния кружкового социал-демократического течения с возникшим массовым движением рабочих. Нет ничего труднее и важнее для молодой партии, как сознательное и умелое применение своей программы к наличным условиям действительности, то есть, установление целесообразной тактики.²⁶⁶

Indeed, the reviewer apparently sees Lenin's work as being entirely in keeping with the programmatic concerns of *Rabochee Delo*: the 'adaptation' of the social

²⁶³ *Rabochee Delo* No 1 139-41

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, No 1 139

²⁶⁵ See note 188

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, No 1 139: 'This brochure, written by a comrade who has been active in Russia during recent years, makes a very pleasing impression. It testifies that our Russian comrades have already outgrown, as a preliminary stage the abstract propaganda of social-democratic principles, just as much as the next step - the process of linking circle-social democracy with the mass upsurge of the workers' movement. There is nothing more difficult and more important for a young party than the wise and conscious adaptation of its programme towards the present conditions of activity, that is, the establishment of an appropriate tactic.'

democratic programme 'towards the present conditions of activity'. Lenin is thus presented, *almost certainly without his consent*, as a supporter of this new journal. Indeed, the reviewer makes this quite clear when he tries to use the contents of the brochure to attack the author of its preface, and through this target, the entire *Osvobozhdenie Truda* critique of 'economic one-sidedness':

Повторяем: брошюра особенно ценна тем, что она нас знакомит из первых рук с действительным состоянием нашего движения, с его жизненной практикой. В этом отношении мы не можем согласиться с товарищем П. Аксельродом, который в своем предисловии склоняется к мысли, что «в общем движение наше ещё только стремится к той ступени развития, которая вполне соответствует тактической точки зрения автора». Впрочем, Аксельрод основывает свое мнение, единственно на «заявлениях более молодых товарищей, сравнительно недавно попавших за границу», признавая в то же время, что новейшие издания наших русских товарищей и «Манифест» социалдемократического съезда в России вполне отражают взгляды, изложенные в брошюре.²⁶⁷

For Axelrod, Lenin's pamphlet is an idealised account of the social-democratic movement, whereas for the reviewer it is an entirely objective piece of description. Axelrod believes the social-democrats are not necessarily taking part in widespread socialist and democratic agitation among the masses in the manner Lenin describes, whereas the reviewer contends that this is the case, and that Lenin's pamphlet offers convincing proof of this fact. If we take a look at the pamphlet itself, we can easily see that the reviewer's argument is not convincing.²⁶⁸ The first thing that the reader notices is that it was written in exile, towards the end of 1897, by which time Lenin had spent two years in the tsarist penal system. His familiarity with the state of the social-democratic committees at that stage can only have been weak. Arrests of leading local activists, a regular occurrence, could change not only the

²⁶⁷ Ibid., No 1 141: 'We repeat: the brochure is of special value because it familiarises us from first hand with the real state of our movement, with its vital activity. In this connection we cannot agree with Comrade Axelrod, who in his foreword leans towards the thought that 'our general movement still only strives towards that degree of development that fully corresponds to the tactical view of the author.' However, Axelrod bases his opinion solely on 'the declarations of younger comrades recently arrived from over the border', recognising at the same time that the most recent publications of our Russian comrades, and the *Manifesto* of the social democratic congress in Russia entirely reflected the opinions expounded in the brochure.'

²⁶⁸ VI Lenin *Collected Works*, ii 323-47

personal composition of social-democratic committees and the editorial boards of their newspapers, but also their political stance.²⁶⁹ Moreover, it also becomes clear that the pamphlet has no intention of saying anything about the internal problems of the social-democratic movement, which is not the same thing as declaring that these problems do not exist. This is because the pamphlet is part of an ongoing polemic with two ‘social-revolutionary’²⁷⁰ parties, *Narodnaia Volia* and *Narodnoe Pravo*, the latter of which also appears in Lenin’s *What the Friends of the People Are*.²⁷¹ Making reference to this earlier attempt to clarify his theoretical views in relation to these parties, Lenin proclaims the need to also clarify their practical differences. These amount to the fact that the ‘social-revolutionaries’, whilst working among the urban proletariat like the social-democrats, confine themselves exclusively to democratic agitation and propaganda, without raising questions connected with class struggle, internationalism, or the prospect of a socialist society.²⁷² From this alone it should be clear that Lenin’s pamphlet is being used out of context by the reviewer. *The Tasks of the Social Democrats* is part of a debate with *other political parties*, a form of writing which inevitably ignores any internal differences which might exist in one of the opposing camps and which is in any case prone to the exaggeration of successes. In such a pamphlet it would not be appropriate to discuss any internal problems of the social-democratic party and this is why Lenin says nothing about the presence or absence of an ‘economic tendency’. To read into this type of silence the opinion that such a tendency does not exist is presumptuous. It is all the more presumptuous in so far as the reviewer sets the view he attributes to Lenin against that of his

²⁶⁹ A Egorov, ‘Zarozhdenie politicheskikh partii’, 377-8. The most well-known example of an organisation changing its politics as a result of the arrest of its leadership would appear to be that of the St Petersburg Union of Struggle [NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 17-21; VI Lenin *Collected Works*, v 378-9].

²⁷⁰ It seems that these two groups were different types of Russian Jacobin with differing views on the agrarian question. This meant that, whilst they rejected the Marxists’ theory of the special role of working class in the revolution, they were also self-consciously anti-bourgeois [VI Lenin *Collected Works*, i 329-32]. However, they do not appear to have had any direct organisational link with the later ‘Essars’, even if their views seem to have been broadly similar. In the same way, there is no evidence of direct descent from the original *Narodnaia Volia* which killed Alexander II to the organisation Lenin is writing about here.

²⁷¹ VI Lenin *Collected Works*, i 329-332; ii 327

²⁷² *Ibid.*, ii 327-8

Osvobozhdenie Truda ally Axelrod, the same Axelrod who, presumably with Lenin's consent, wrote the foreword to the pamphlet. All this seems like a rather malicious attempt to sow discord in the ranks of the Plekhanovites, whilst at the same time trying to use Lenin as an unwilling puppet for *Rabochee Delo* views. It is for these reasons that we believe Lenin was actually provoked into involvement in the dispute within the Union Abroad, despite the quite popular view that he was the main aggressor.²⁷³

* * * *

The *Credo* of Kuskova, a sometime member of the Union Abroad who was also active in St Petersburg, is just another example of those texts which have received a lot of attention simply because Lenin directed criticism against them. It takes the form of a draft programme of the revisionists, the conscious critics of Marxism within Russian social-democracy, whose views must be distinguished from the merely theoretically undeveloped opinions to which *Rabochee Delo* officially subscribed. A reliable exposition of the *Credo* already exists and for this reason there is no need to rehearse its main arguments.²⁷⁴ Instead, on the basis of what has already been noted in relation to the first issue of *Rabochee Delo* we would like to challenge the view that Lenin's *Protest* against Kuskova, supported by the signatures of sixteen other Siberian exiles, and which appeared in the fourth issue of *Rabochee Delo* was simply a rather bullying attack on a private opinion. This is only an echo of the view taken by the editors of *Rabochee Delo*²⁷⁵ and it has been unthinkingly repeated on far too many occasions.²⁷⁶ It misses the point, utterly. The *Protest* is in reality a conscious response

²⁷³ BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 145; L Shapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 36-38; R Service, *Lenin, A Political Life, Volume One* 79; P Pomper, *The Intelligentsia and Power*, 57-8

²⁷⁴ N Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought* 141-5

²⁷⁵ *Rabochee Delo* No 4 (Autumn, 1899), 24: «Мы от души приветствуем этот решительный протест наших российских товарищей против воззрений изложенных в " », этой попытки извратить действительный характер социалдемократического движения на Западе и в России. Но мы твердо убеждены, что этот 'символ веры' представляет собой не больше, как мнение единичных лиц, отражает лишь идейную путаницу в головах его авторов. »

²⁷⁶ JHL Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 59-60 65-6; L Shapiro, *The Communist Party*

on the part of Lenin to the previous distortion of his real views by *Rabochee Delo*, and to their intention of separating him and his allies within the Russian social democratic movement from *Osvobozhdenie Truda*. The very first line of the *Protest* contradicts this attempt. It is a declaration of factional loyalty:

A tendency has been observed among Russian Social-Democrats recently to depart from the fundamental principles of Russian Social-Democracy that were proclaimed by its founders and foremost fighters, members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group.²⁷⁷

Given *Rabochee Delo*'s political game-playing, it is hard to misunderstand the significance of this phrase. It indicates very clearly that *Rabochee Delo*'s divide and conquer stratagem will not succeed. Just in case the point was lost on the editors, Lenin then cites Axelrod, the main victim of the reviewer's remarks in the first issue of the journal:

The mere fact that it was possible for a programme like this to appear shows how well grounded were the fears expressed by one of the foremost champions of Russian Social-Democracy, P. B. Axelrod, when, at the end of 1897, he wrote of the possibility of the following prospect: "The working-class movement keeps to the narrow but of purely economic conflicts between the workers and employers and, in itself, taken as a whole, is not of a political character, while in the struggle for political freedom the advanced strata of the proletariat follow the revolutionary circles and groups of the so-called intelligentsia" (Axelrod, *Present Tasks and Tactics of the Russian Social-Democrats*, Geneva, 1898, p. 19)²⁷⁸

For Lenin, Axelrod is correct to warn of the dangers of a challenge to Marxism within social-democracy. He dissociates himself from the perspective of *Rabochee Delo* that some kind of 'economic one-sidedness' is not a serious problem, an opinion which, in a rather high-handed manner, *Rabochee Delo* tried to attribute to him. The unambiguous message is sent: for all *Rabochee Delo*'s rather low insinuations, the Russian supporters of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* will not tolerate attempts to separate them from their émigré leaders. Kuskova's document, in this

of the Soviet Union, 34-6; RD Warth *Lenin*, (New York: Twayne, 1973) 38-9; R Service, *Lenin: A Biography*, (London: Pan MacMillan, 2002) 124; LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered*, 221

²⁷⁷ VI Lenin *Collected Works*, iv 167

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, iv 178-9

sense, can be seen something of a pretext justifying this type of public statement and, if it is therefore possible to regard her work as the victim of 'collateral damage', in the sense that it was thus drawn into an argument between the two groups within the Union Abroad without her consent, then we must also note that exactly the same method had been previously employed by *Rabochee Delo*. Indeed, having tried to force a split among the supporters of Plekhanov by distorting the meaning of Lenin's *The Tasks of the Social Democrats*, the hapless *Rabochee Delo* as a result of Lenin's 'reply' found itself in a situation where it had to denounce Kuskova despite the fact that, as we shall see in the next section, it viewed her as a potential ally. Thus, whilst their own splitting tactic failed and was also dishonest, Lenin's reply succeeded whilst adopting the far more scrupulous method of requesting the publication of the *Credo* alongside his own criticism of it, so that readers could decide for themselves whether he was fairly representing the contents of the document.²⁷⁹

In its editorial commentary on the *Protest*, *Rabochee Delo* distances itself from the *Credo*, a fact which could be used to support the claim that the journal was essentially Marxist, for all its theoretical backwardness.²⁸⁰ However, this would be to take the statement that it 'heartily welcomes the announcement of the Russian comrades' at face value, something not so easy to accept given the circumstances we have just described. Lenin's *Protest* involves an expression of solidarity with *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, the authority of which *Rabochee Delo* implicitly denied in its own programme and whose unity *Rabochee Delo* clearly sought to disrupt. This impression that this 'welcome' was disingenuous is only reinforced by *Rabochee Delo*'s suggestion as to how the *Credo* problem should be resolved: by calling for an all-sided debate on the future programme of the RSDLP, and to solicit articles for publication in a separate pamphlet on the question.²⁸¹ Intriguingly, this debate was to include contributions from Bernstein and Kautsky, though no reference is made to Plekhanov in *Rabochee Delo*'s plan. In relation to this omission, it should not be

²⁷⁹ Ibid., iv 167-82

²⁸⁰ *Rabochee Delo* 4 (Sep. - Dec. 1899) 24-7. Intriguingly, the anti-Bolshevik historian Schapiro, one of the few to realise exactly who it was that printed Lenin's famous *Protest*, does not exploit this argument [L Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 36-7].

²⁸¹ *Rabochee Delo* 5 (Sep. - Dec. 1899) 1-2

necessary to repeat the arguments made in the first chapter concerning Lih's work and the relative merits of Plekhanov and Kautsky as political authorities within Russian Marxism. Surely it is obvious from what we said earlier that Plekhanov's exclusion in favour of Kautsky, though in one sense a personal snub, also has a political character, strengthening the hand of reformism at the expense of *Osvobozhdenie Truda's* clearly revolutionary politics. This tendency is, of course, shown far more explicitly by *Rabochee Delo's* decision to invite Bernstein into the debate, despite the fact that he had recently been heavily defeated in his attempt to challenge the German social-democratic programme.²⁸² His views were therefore in no way representative of the German party and had the status of a private opinion, not dissimilar to that of Kuskova. The only conclusion to be drawn from this, is that an individual with no special knowledge of Russian conditions and whose views had no official status within international social-democracy should be given a greater say in the writing of the Russian programme than Russia's most well-known and competent Marxist theoretician. It was surely impossible for the Plekhanov supporters not to see this as a calculated exclusion, and an indication that, despite the previous words of sympathy, the struggle between the two tendencies in the Union Abroad would continue.

iii) *A Secret Alliance is Exposed*

Up to now, the study has only considered the *public* activity and declarations of the *Rabochee Delo* faction. From these activities the conclusion has been drawn that, for all their awkwardness in matters of theory, they represented something of an intermediate position between the revolutionary Marxism of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and the outright challenge to Marxism represented by Kuskova. Taking into account this type of evidence alone, the view that the journal was clearly 'anti-revisionist' in its ideological content can seem attractive. However this would be to ignore the fact that in Plekhanov's *Vademecum for the Editors of Rabochee Delo*, a work in which the author presents documentary evidence of clearly anti-Marxist views in the Russian social-democratic movement, the 'Gospodin G' whose two letters make up the third item in the compilation is none other than ZM Kopel'zon, the administrative head of

²⁸² Ibid., 33; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, v 358-9

the Union Abroad and probably *Rabochee Delo*'s most significant practical organiser.²⁸³ Significantly, these letters were clearly written *after* the creation of the RSDLP and not 'many years previously' as Keep would have us believe.²⁸⁴ They therefore reveal a quite unusual picture, in which their author's views seem to be almost identical to those of Kuskova, an individual who in the *Credo* denied the possibility of building effective trade unions in Russia, let alone a workers' party,²⁸⁵ and whose views were publicly repudiated in the fourth issue of the Union Abroad's official journal. Thus, in private the head of the Union Abroad also appears to reject the very idea of the RSDLP even though he is in public one of their most prominent members. This poses the question of what his views really are, a question which, given Kopel'zon's prominence, can also be reasonably asked of *Rabochee Delo* as a whole. A certain degree of support for some of the writings of Marx in the public programme of this tendency can be detected, but this in itself does not imply revolutionary politics, methods or aims. Adding to this ambiguity, there now appears to be the problem that the views expressed in the programme and the views *Rabochee Delo* supporters express in private appear to be two separate things. This leads to the conclusion that they are essentially a hypocritical and rather confused political grouping. This idea is particularly interesting from the point of view of our thesis because, as we shall see in the next chapter, the Kopel'zon whose letters appear in the *Vademecum* is the very same Kopel'zon who comes to negotiate with Lenin in February 1900, armed with plans for the reconstruction of the RSDLP and its newspaper *Rabochaia Gazeta*. In the light of Plekhanov's evidence, it seems that Lenin was on this occasion negotiating somewhat unwittingly with quite a complex, politically unstable character, and that Lenin's ignorance of this instability had significant consequences in terms of his relations with Plekhanov. Accordingly we must take a look at the *Vademecum* in order to fully understand the context of what is to follow.

²⁸³ This interpretation is supported by DB Riazanov, a contemporary member of the Union Abroad [GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, xii iv].

²⁸⁴ Ibid., xii 499-500; JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 58

²⁸⁵ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 252: 'Talk of an independent workers' party is nothing but the result of transplanting alien aims and alien achievements onto our soil.' Ibid., 253: 'For the Russian Marxist there is only one way out: participation in, i.e. assistance for, the economic struggle of the proletariat and participation in liberal opposition activity.'

The form of Plekhanov's exposure is quite cryptic, in that it includes two letters by Kopel'zon, one of which describes the opinions of a comrade referred to as N.N.²⁸⁶ Given this N.N.'s familiarity with Belgium and Russia, it is almost certain that his real name was SN Prokopovich, an individual very close to Kuskova.²⁸⁷ The M.M. who also features in the letters is therefore almost certainly Kuskova herself. This can be said because Prokopovich, a prominent though youthful figure on the anti-Marxist wing of the Russian social-democracy, was completing his studies in Brussels at around this time.²⁸⁸ In other words, behind these befogging initials, which were presumably used to fool the police, Plekhanov is here presenting the private opinions of the Union Abroad's leader on two outspoken critics of Marxism, one of whom was publicly condemned by *Rabochee Delo* in the autumn of 1899. The result does not present Kopel'zon, or the *Rabochee Delo* faction as a whole in an entirely positive light. In the first letter, Kopel'zon simply describes the opinions of N.N., 'a man distinguished by his original thinking and ability to critically relate to all revolutionary traditions and opinions'.²⁸⁹ The latter's views are solidly anti-revolutionary. Marxism, for him, is unscientific in so far as it believes revolution is imminent: what the future will bring is not something that can be studied scientifically.²⁹⁰ The present day movement on the other hand can and should be studied so that the social-democracy can work out 'realistic' goals for the working class. In the Russian context, this means a complete break with agitation for democracy and socialism. In their place, specific political demands must be made that aim to win piecemeal reform from the autocracy. Publicly advocating a new form of society or a new political system must stop.²⁹¹ The idea of forming a revolutionary workers' party aiming at the overthrow of the autocracy is 'senseless', as it is destined

²⁸⁶ GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, xii 494-99

²⁸⁷ GV Plekhanov & PB Axelrod, *Perepiska*, i 175n From this it seems clear that these allies eventually married. In fact they may have already been married prior to the events in question.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, i 175n, ii 1-43; GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, xii 495-6; VI Lenin *Collected Works*, iv 183-92

²⁸⁹ «Он - человек выдающийся по своему оригинальному мышлению и умению критически относиться ко всяким революционным традициям и взглядам. » [GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, xii 495]

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii 495

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, xii 495

to fail.²⁹² Any discussion of the ideas of Marxism and socialism must be confined to propaganda circles attended only by intellectuals, and should not be discussed with workers.²⁹³ Demonstrations under autocratic conditions are impossible, and calling for them is premature.²⁹⁴ It is more logical to campaign on the immediate economic demands of the workers, even where these contradict democratic and socialist aims.²⁹⁵ The letter then cites the example of a strike by male workers against the employment of women at a certain factory.²⁹⁶ It argues that such anti-progressive attitudes are common among workers and that the theoretical leadership is insufficiently aware of this problem.

In the second letter, 'Gospodin G' notes that attempts have been made, contrary to N.N.'s advice, to create a revolutionary workers' party in Russia. His attitude towards it is rather scathing:

Что касается образования в России новой социал-демократической партии, то я могу сказать только, что она составила из социалистов революционеров и рабочих революционеров носит яркий политический характер и более всего подходит к программе Аксельрода и Кольцова. Они ходят взять самодержавие на «ура». Во всяком случае как и Российская, так и новая Русская мало сил имеют и имели бы мало, даже если бы они соединились. Тем более, что в Питере и других местах остались группы, не желающие иметь с нашей дело в смысле организационном, считая nonsense'ом политиканство, не соответствующее действительному положению дел в России. Впрочем оговорюсь, все это - слухи, мало проверенные. Для меня ясно только одно, что создать в настоящее время партию и программу очень не трудно. Есть ли это шаг вперед - вопрос. Впрочем, посмотрим ...²⁹⁷

²⁹² Ibid., xii 497

²⁹³ Ibid., xii 497-8

²⁹⁴ Ibid., xii 498

²⁹⁵ Ibid., xii 498-9

²⁹⁶ Ibid., xii 499

²⁹⁷ Ibid., xii 499-500: 'As regards the formation in Russia of a new social democratic party, I can say only that it is made up of socialist revolutionaries and worker revolutionaries and that it carries a clear political character and that it mostly conforms to the programme of Axelrod and Kol'tsov. It wants to take on the autocracy 'at the hurrah'. At best, both in Great Russia and in the new frontier territories they have few forces and would have few even if they united. Moreover, in Petersburg and other places there are still groups not wishing to have dealings with us in the organisational sense, regarding as nonsensical intrigue whatever does not correspond to the real situation in Russia. However, I note

Kopel'zon then continues to recommend the views of Prokopovich:

Новый апостол остается мне мил по-прежнему. Его увлечения не так страшны, как это Вам издали кажется, и, по-моему, даже очень полезны для отрезвления «политиков» разного рода. Я убежден, что он в будущем принесет нам много пользы. У кого спрашивается, нет увлечений или теоретических крайностей?! Это все-таки не мешает работать вместе и ценить человека, как деятеля и человека искреннего.

Мы с ним немного расходимся в вопросах о необходимости выставления в программах организационного начала, в смысле организации всякого рода обществ.

Не отрицая этого в принципе, мы считаем, что он недостаточно знает условия жизни русского пролетариата.

Это есть такая же крайность, как выдвигание на первый план политической агитации и борьбы. Как то, так и другое есть плод теоретизирования, с одной стороны, а незнание условий жизни русского пролетариата - с другой. Во всем остальном у нас полное согласие, и это разногласие не помешает нам вместе работать...²⁹⁸

Unless these letters are complete fabrications, or someone can demonstrate that our belief that 'Gospodin G' is Kopel'zon is mistaken, or can show that the 'new apostle' of the second letter is not the same person as the N.N. of the first, it appears that Plekhanov has here quite effectively, and in defiance of one or two learned opinions on this matter, made the link between *Rabochee Delo* and the openly anti-

that all this is rumour, little of it proven. For me it is clear only that to create at the current time a party and programme is not very difficult. Whether it is a step forward is a question. However, we will see.'

²⁹⁸ Ibid., xii 500: 'The new apostle remains as good to me as before. His predilection is no so terrible as it seemed to you, and in my view is even very useful for sobering up the 'politicals' of various sorts. I am convinced that in the future he will be useful to us. Who, ask yourself, doesn't have predilections or theoretical extremes? It doesn't prevent working together and valuing someone as an active and sincere person. We differ with him a little on the question of the necessity of introducing into programmes an organisational principle, in the sense of the organisation of all types of societies. Not denying this in principle, we consider that he doesn't know the conditions in which the Russian proletariat live sufficiently well. It is that very extremism that drove the first plan of political agitation and struggle. This, just like the other is the fruit of theory, on the one hand, and ignorance of the conditions of life of the Russian proletariat on the other. In all the rest we have complete agreement, and this difference does not stop us working together.'

Marxist tendency of Kuskova and Prokopovich.²⁹⁹ In private, Kopel'zon speaks openly about the 'usefulness' of a revisionist as a counterweight against the revolutionary Marxists, whilst expressing the closest sympathy with the former group. Yet, when openly challenged about the existence of revisionism in the Russian social democracy, the revisionists themselves appear to have been dealt a fairly brutal kick from *Rabochee Delo* in the form of public dissociation from their views. Thus there appears to be a highly contradictory set of political characteristics among the group aligned to *Rabochee Delo*.

In the light of the information so far presented, it can be reasonably assumed that the following political situation actually obtained within the Union of Russian Social Democrats. The majority, supporters of *Rabochee Delo*, wanted to build an organisation tolerant of ideological strains ranging from the anti-Marxist to the revolutionary Marxist. They adopted an intermediate position, but essentially as a part of a manoeuvre. They believed that this position would give them power within the organisation, enabling them to defeat the more revolutionary elements by forming a secret bloc with the revisionists: thus the influence of the Plekhanovites could be blunted. However, this plan would only work if *Rabochee Delo* avoided offending a section of Plekhanov's supporters. Excessive public sympathies for the revisionists could alienate not only Plekhanov, who was clearly viewed as disposable, but also extremely 'useful' people such as the group in Russia formed around Lenin. The latter were valued because of their superior energy and experience in the underground, and *Rabochee Delo* seemed to hope that this feature would ultimately cause them to break with the exclusively émigré Plekhanov group. Only thus is it possible to understand the bizarre spectacle of an individual proclaiming his ideological solidarity with someone who scorns the very idea of the RSDLP whilst remaining at the head of its émigré organisation. Consequently, when the Plekhanovites finally split from the Union Abroad, the latter inevitably became an organisation voicing exclusively non-Marxist views. It was useless to put forward a compromise position when there was as only one and not two willing partners with whom they could collaborate.³⁰⁰ The first

²⁹⁹ JH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 54-66; LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered*, 218, 290-91

³⁰⁰ VI Lenin *Collected Works*, iv 378-9

significant result of this was a new attempt on the part of *Rabochee Delo* to state its political position. This took the form of a fairly classic statement of the ‘theory of stages’, by this time acknowledged by both the Plekhanovites and certain supporters of *Rabochee Delo* as the hallmark of ‘Economism’, a definite non-Marxist trend which had for some time existed in the Russian social-democratic movement. An exposition of this theory appeared in the seventh issue of *Rabochee Delo*, and appeared to become the basis for the politics of the journal during the rest of its existence, with the exception of one brief but dramatic departure which we will have cause to discuss in the next chapter. As such, it is important to examine this article, in order to properly appreciate Lenin's attitude to *Rabochee Delo*, as later expressed in the policy of *Iskra*.

iv) *Economism*

Because of its tendency towards manoeuvres and organisational politicking, it was well over a year after the publication of its initial programme that *Rabochee Delo* attempted to develop the implications of this rather ambiguous founding document. The broad ranging debate, involving the German theorists the journal had promised was not realised. The editors of the journal had commented on events and published polemics from different perspectives but had, beyond hints and nuances, refrained from publicly stating their own views.³⁰¹ In August 1900 this changed with the appearance of the chief editor BI Krichevskii's own article on the relation between economics and politics in the social democratic movement.³⁰² In it, he unequivocally declared that all social democrats supported the struggle for ‘political rights’ on the part of the proletariat, but that there were differences on the best way to achieve them.³⁰³ For Krichevskii, the best way was economic struggle. Citing the first section of the *Communist Manifesto*, he claimed that the great majority of workers first become rebellious in the defence of their own immediate economic interests.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ *Rabochee Delo* 5 (Sep. - Dec. 1899) 63-71; No 6 (Apr. 1900) 28-42

³⁰² BI Krichevskii, *Rabochee Delo* 7 (Aug. 1900) 1-22

³⁰³ «Русским рабочим приходится ещё бороться за все те политические права, которыми уже давно пользуются рабочие Запада. И весь вопрос пока заключается в том, какими средствами они легче всего добьются нужных им прав. » [Ibid., No 7 1-2]

³⁰⁴ Ibid., No 7 3

Consequently, the first bonds of solidarity are always felt between workers at the same enterprise, and only after such bonds have first of all been established can trade or industrial unions be created.³⁰⁵ However, in autocratic Russia even the most limited strikes were against the law, and as a result workers found themselves opposing not only employers, but also the police. This inevitably caused them to associate political freedom, the freedom to organise, the freedom to make criticisms and to press demands on the employers and the government, with an effective defence of their own most basic interests.³⁰⁶ From this Krichevskii concluded that struggles for economic improvements in themselves radicalised workers, and that the main role of the social democrats was to assist this process by means of agitation. The result was a treatise on tactics. Krichevskii states that skilled agitators must correctly judge the moral level of the workers he is to address and adapt their slogans to the audience. The workers' consciousness passes through different definite 'stages', akin to grades in a school and based almost exclusively on their past experience of strike struggles and clashes with the police.³⁰⁷ For this reason, different slogans are appropriate in different localities and even for workers in different enterprises. In an area where there is no tradition of labour organising, an agitator must focus on simple, unambitious slogans and demands, whereas in a more 'battle hardened' area, a more militant stance should be adopted.³⁰⁸ In the former, relatively little need be said about politics and rights, in the latter this would be more appropriate, as workers would already have realised the importance of political freedom.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., No 7 3

³⁰⁶ Ibid., No 7 10-13

³⁰⁷ «Отсюда вытекает известная постепенность в *агитационной* деятельности наших организаций, сообразующихся с уровнем данного слоя рабочих. Но эта постепенность не имеет ничего общего с уродованием своей программы, с оппортунистическим скрыванием конечных целей движения. Она является только необходимым *педагогическим приемом* в интересах прочного вовлечения масса в движение и развития её классово сознания. Что сказал бы об учителе который начал бы преподавать высшую математику ученикам, не знающим четырёх арифметических правил?» [Ibid., No 7 10]

³⁰⁸ «(А)гитатор должен иметь в виду, чтобы требования, которые он бросает в массу, были связаны с опытом её борьбы. Только под этим условием требования станут *требованиями самой массы*, войдут в её плоть и кровь и прослужат к её подъему на все высшей и высшей уровень.» [Ibid., No 7 10]

Undoubtedly, Krichevskii's thesis was not in the least bit original. It was in all its main points a rehearsal of views stated a previous pamphlet, *On Agitation*, which was written by the Vilno activist AI Kremer, and published with the assistance of the future *Iskra* editor Martov.³⁰⁹ The original pamphlet was probably written in 1893, and apparently made its appearance in St Petersburg in hand written form during the following year. It had argued:

The task of the Social Democrats is to conduct agitation among the factory workers on the basis of existing petty needs and demands. The struggle aroused by such agitation will train the workers to defend their own interests, increase their courage, give them confidence in their strength, a consciousness of their need for unity, and ultimately it will place before them the more important questions which demand solutions. Having prepared the way for more serious struggle, the working class proceeds to the resolution of these vital questions, and agitation on the basis of these questions must have as its aim the formation of class consciousness. The class struggle in this more conscious form establishes the basis for political agitation, the aim of which will be to alter existing conditions of the working class. The subsequent programme of the Social Democrats is self-evident.³¹⁰

This is nothing but a more concise expression of the argument in Krichevskii's pamphlet. Significantly, both Akimov, a *Rabochee Delo* supporter, and Plekhanov associate this pamphlet with the 'economic tendency' in Russian social democracy that was mentioned earlier. Akimov describes the effect *On Agitation* had on the social-democratic movement in the following way:

The necessary note had been struck. The period of 'economic' agitation was launched in Petersburg. And the agitators who had raised no echo when they indicated the existing political and social order found not only the workers with whom they were in direct contact, but also the wide strata of the working class to which they had no direct access responded uniformly and boldly to their call to 'economic' warfare.³¹¹

In the same way, Plekhanov writes, in *Once Again, Socialism and Political Struggle*:

³⁰⁹ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 192-205

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 199-200

³¹¹ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 239-40

Как известно, экономическое направление с наибольшей яркостью выразилось у нас в «Рабочей Мысли», не раз высказывавшей совершенно «несуразные» суждения по политическим вопросам. Но я не стану говорить о «Рабочей Мысли» именно потому, что суждения её публицистов часто бывают совершенно «несуразны». Мне хочется заглянуть «в корень вещей» и решить, не были ли эти публицисты введены во искушение некоторыми взглядами, ещё недавно очень распространенными у нас и высказанными впервые серьезными и основательными людьми. С этой целью я останавлиюсь на известной брошюре «Об агитации».

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Putting this evidence together, the unavoidable conclusion is that, for these writers at least, 'the economic tendency' did not imply a refusal to engage in politics, and has nothing to do with a de-politicised 'trade unionism pure and simple', as has sometimes been suggested.³¹³ There is no reason to believe that the latter idea acquired significant support within Russian social democracy at this time. On the contrary, it is a belief that political struggle emerges naturally from economic struggle, and that this natural process should not be unduly hurried by the social democrats. This conclusion has a few interesting consequences if we can assume that 'the economic tendency', to which Plekhanov and Akimov refer is more or less the same thing as what is later referred to as 'Economism'. If this is the case, then Krichevskii's article of August 1900 is also an unalloyed statement of 'Economist' views. This might seem like a pedantic point, or possibly something worse, given that we are appear to be attaching a label with undoubtedly negative connotations on a definite political group. However, in order to make sense of what follows, we believe this is necessary. More than one seemingly authoritative writer has denied the existence of a definite non-Marxist trend with clear political positions and an organisational structure inside

³¹² GV Plekhanov *Sochineniia*, xii 74: 'As is well known, the economic tendency is with sufficient clarity expressed by our *Rabochaia Mysl'*, which has more than once declared the discussion of political questions 'completely absurd'. But I will not speak about *Rabochaia Mysl'* precisely because the discussion of her publicists often ends up completely 'absurd'. I want to peep into 'the root of things' and to decide whether it these publicists were not led into temptation by some opinions still recently widespread among us and proclaimed first of all by serious and well-grounded people. To this end, we stop at the well-known brochure *On Agitation*.'

³¹³ T Dan, *The Origins of Bolshevism*, 226-7, 236; R Service, *Lenin, A Political Life*, i 87; LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered*, 218

Russian social democracy during the time when *Iskra* was brought into existence.³¹⁴ Krichevskii's article suggests the direct opposite. The significance of this is that we can argue that, in so far as Lenin and his allies occasionally wrote articles against the 'Economists', he was fighting a definite opponent, and not a figment of his own imagination.

Unfortunately a detailed investigation of mass agitation tactics goes beyond the scope of our thesis, which is rather more concerned with the relations obtaining among different factions inside the RSDLP and the process of party reconstruction. However, it is hard to refrain, in finishing this chapter, from the observation that Krichevskii's 'stagist' or 'Economist' position has very little to do with Marx and Engels's own political method. Despite Krichevskii's use of the *Communist Manifesto* in his article, his thesis was clearly not derived from a detailed study of this document. Marx and Engels do indeed point out that the development of capitalism forces workers to fight back using ever greater co-ordination, which ultimately leads to class consciousness and political struggle.³¹⁵ However this cannot be translated into a thesis on party tactics which states that the attitude of the party's own activists should somehow mirror this gradual process. In fact, the tactical section of the *Communist Manifesto* is not in the first part,³¹⁶ which Krichevskii cites, but the fourth.³¹⁷ It deals all too briefly with the relations of the Communist League to definite parties and movements, all of which disappeared soon after the work was published. Nothing is said in this section that even approximates to 'stagism', or to a preliminary phase of 'purely economic' agitation: in fact nothing specific is said about agitation at all. Unsurprisingly, given that it was written at the height of a revolutionary upsurge, Marx and Engels seem to have assumed worker involvement in organised party political struggle. In re-publications of the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels noted that such advice was no longer relevant, as the parties in question no longer existed and the whole social and political situation had changed.³¹⁸ A fuller account of their tactical

³¹⁴ JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 84; R Service, *Lenin, A Political Life*, i 87

³¹⁵ K Marx & F Engels *Collected Works*, vi 492-3

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vi 482-96

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vi 518-9

³¹⁸ K Marx & F Engels, *Selected Works in Three Volumes* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969) i 98-99

thinking during the 1848 revolutions is to be found in the *Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League* of 1850, which deals with the question of how the working class should relate to other anti-autocratic social forces, such as the democratic petty-bourgeoisie or the liberal capitalist class during a democratic revolution against an autocratic government.³¹⁹ Marx advises that, having acquired arms, workers should under no circumstances give them up and states that they should form their own independent military force. This force could form temporary alliances with the more radicalised layers of the population against the more conservative.³²⁰ Thus it would support the bourgeoisie to the extent that it gave battle to the aristocracy and the monarchy; the petty bourgeoisie where it engaged in struggle with the big bourgeoisie and so on, whilst opposing them in so far as they failed to fight the enemies of democracy, or tried to deny democratic rights to workers.³²¹ In more peaceful circumstances a workers' party should contest elections, and even if a mass democratic party were to appear, small groups of Communist workers should find a way of broadcasting their views and should avoid being submerged in such a generic democratic movement.³²² Thus, once again, we see no reference to 'stagism' which seems totally inappropriate in a revolutionary situation. Defenders of Krichevskii could justifiably reply that Russia was not in such circumstances, but this would only point to his lack of wisdom in citing the *Communist Manifesto* in an attempt to back up his argument. This choice of text would have been totally inappropriate to the Russian situation at the turn of the twentieth century. As was shown in the previous chapter, in so far as Marx and Engels had a view on the methods to be used in Tsarist Russia, they expressed conditional sympathy not so much with 'stagism' as with *Narodnaia Volia*.

³¹⁹ K Marx & F Engels, *Collected Works*, x 277-87

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, x 282-3

³²¹ *Ibid.*, x 281-5

³²² *Ibid.*, x 284

This chapter has shown how two separate political tendencies came to exist in the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad in the period immediately preceding Lenin's arrival in western Europe. The first of these tendencies was led by the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* group and represented a revolutionary interpretation of Marxism, based on a familiarity of Marx and Engels's social and political theories as a whole. The second, represented by *Rabochee Delo* involved only a superficial engagement with Marxism, reflected a large degree of ignorance when it came to the actual views of Engels and Marx, and appeared at times to be rather dishonest. In its initial form, the *Rabochee Delo* trend appears to have identified exclusively with a part of Marx's economic theory, but later, in attempt to give this theory some more concrete political content, it advocated a reformist, gradualist tactical doctrine which, despite their attempt to link it to certain passages in the Marx-Engels *oeuvre*, had no real roots in it. In between these two points, *Rabochee Delo* completed with *Osvobozhdenie Truda* for an alliance with Lenin and failed, largely because of its crude political methods. The price of its failure was a severance of relations with its secret ally, the revisionist ED Kuskova. Prior to this event they had hoped to play the revisionist off against *Osvobozhdenie Truda* with the aim of maintaining a powerful ideological centre ground, a goal which probably determined their initial attempt at expressing a theoretical world view more than any commitment to political principles. With the failure of this cunning stratagem, *Rabochee Delo* were forced to take a more solid political position, the result of which was a clearly reformist political outlook which had everything in common with the views of the Economist movement of the mid 1890s.

The relevance of all this to *Iskra* is that it is simply impossible to make sense of what follows in this thesis without bearing these considerations in mind. During the period dating from April 1900 through to March 1902, the presence and character of *Rabochee Delo* became a consistent feature influencing *Iskra*'s thinking. During this whole period, Lenin's group made efforts to reverse the split between reformist and revolutionary in the emigration, seemingly with the effect that he was trying to create a social-democratic movement, specifically an RSDLP, which had both reformist and revolutionary elements in it. In this sense, our proof that *Rabochee Delo* really was

something quite different from Plekhanovite Marxism is significant. Specifically, it gives an indication of the degree of tolerance Lenin was prepared to demonstrate towards his ideological opponents within the social-democratic movement. This is not to suggest that there was not a certain agenda behind this desire for a broad workers' party, nor to imply that through this apparent policy of tolerance, Lenin abandoned the ambition to lead it at any point. However it is necessary to point out the difference between this interpretation and that of those who wish to portray Lenin as an inveterate splitter, who wanted to drive 'heretics' out of the RSDLP. The events and debates studied in this chapter provide little support for this view, instead suggesting that Lenin advocated the reconstruction of a broad RSDLP in which the Plekhanovites would be but one tendency. The chapter does not lend support to the idea that Economism was finished as a trend by 1900, nor to the idea that 'Economism' was a nothing more than a polemical label used by Lenin to discredit his opponents. The presence of a separate programme from that of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* should be sufficient proof that the conflict had a genuine ideological basis, whilst Krichevskii's article of August 1900 is mere one of several proofs that a fully fledged anti-Plekhanovite faction continued to operate in the Russian social-democracy, with a basis in the Union Abroad and its journal *Rabochee Delo*.

Chapter Three: Autumn 1899-Autumn 1901: Organisational Tactics

The previous chapter showed how Lenin was faced with contradictory pressures during the period we are studying, owing to his rival commitments to the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* group and the RSDLP. As such, the study has so far concentrated on the character and situation of the former, and in doing so has had more than a little to say about *Rabochee Delo*. Now it is time to address the second aspect of Lenin's dilemma, showing how he was determined to play a leading role in the RSDLP despite the fact that it appeared to be dominated by adherents of the anti-Marxist trend, and the fact that some of its leading individuals were not particularly honest. The next stage of the argument is to show how, out of the basic contradiction between *Rabochee Delo* and *Osvobozhdenie Truda* discussed in the previous chapter, there emerged a new, secondary opposition between Lenin and Plekhanov on the question of how to deal with the Economists and how to relate to the RSDLP generally. That is to say, out of a basic ideological conflict between a revolutionary and a reformist trends in the social-democratic movement, a conflict on the question of correct tactics emerged within the revolutionary camp. The origins of this new conflict appear to lie in Plekhanov's crude methods of opposing *Rabochee Delo*. His campaign appears to have started with very aggressive demands for factional rights within the Union Abroad, demands implicitly based on the belief that the organisation could not survive without his literary input.³²³ When these demands were not met and his bluff was called, Plekhanov published his exposure of *Rabochee Delo*, the *Vademecum*, which appeared to include letters from individuals not meant for publication, a method many would consider problematic, and potentially counter-productive. Plekhanov's performance concluded with a walkout at a Second Congress of the Union Abroad dominated by the *Rabochee Delo* trend, an action which posed the question of whether *Osvobozhdenie Truda* could still reasonably be considered a part of the RSDLP and which was accompanied by an unsuccessful assertion of proprietor's rights to the Union's printing press.³²⁴

In marked contrast to such measures, Lenin pursued a much more subtle line,

³²³ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 279-81

³²⁴ Ibid., i 306-15

based far more on attempts to co-operate with *Rabochee Delo* than on attempts to seek a decisive confrontation. One of the most important reasons for this appears to have been the unfavourable balance of forces obtaining between the revolutionary Marxists and the Economists. Specifically, it seems that Lenin considered the split actually prosecuted by Plekhanov to have been unwise, owing to the fact that the revolutionary Marxists in the emigration lacked the type of factional apparatus with which they could take their argument into Russia. Indeed, one result of this appeared to be that even Krupskaya and Lenin were taken in by the Economists' representation of the split with *Osvobozhdenie Truda*: activists such as these were simply not hearing the other side of the argument. For this reason, Lenin seemed willing to compromise with his opponent and to work with *Rabochee Delo* on the construction of a common RSDLP apparatus which could carry both Economist and revolutionary Marxist ideas into Russia. This politically sophisticated decision provoked an angry response from Plekhanov who saw in it signs of betrayal on the part of Lenin. In this chapter, we will show that first appearances gave every justification to this type of response on the part of Plekhanov, in so far as Lenin's concept of cooperation involved working very closely with the rather scheming, rather two-faced Kopel'zon. However, by studying the sum total of Lenin's actions up to the end of 1901, we also hope to make it clear that such appearances were in fact deceptive and that not for a single minute had Lenin abandoned the goal of overturning the influence of *Rabochee Delo* and Economism in the RSDLP, and of giving pride of place to the revolutionary Marxist trend, including the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* group.

As with the previous chapter, we will also see how chance events affected Lenin's tactical thinking, thus continuing to pursue our argument that, for all his determination, Lenin could not have been operating in accordance with a preconceived plan. If incidents such as the attempt by *Rabochee Delo* to split the ranks of the revolutionaries and *Osvobozhdenie Truda*'s break with the Union Abroad took place entirely without Lenin's participation, the same can be said in this chapter of the attempt to recruit Lenin to the editorial board of *Rabochaia Gazeta*, the Economists' plans for a Second Congress in April 1900 and the ultimate collapse of these plans owing to police intervention. In relation to all these little-discussed incidents, it seems that Lenin had to develop policies in response to changing

circumstances. Not only that, he sometimes had to reverse previous policies owing to the sheer unpredictability of the situation. Indeed, we are led to the unavoidable conclusion that the central project of the entire period we are discussing, the *Iskra* newspaper itself, was the product of precisely such a rapid reversal of policy. This unorthodox conclusion seems indisputable on the basis of the facts, and as such it may lead to a questioning of whether Lenin's activity during the period we are discussing was actually motivated by any particular guiding principle, and whether it was not simply a case of extended political improvisation devoid of any real goal. However, such an idea cannot be taken seriously. In the previous chapter we saw how Lenin demonstrated his loyalty to *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and fought on their behalf in response to an attempt to separate him from the group. This chapter will provide further evidence that, despite differences on tactical questions and a certain degree of tactically-inspired organisational separation, Lenin always acted in a way designed to promote the influence of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* views within the RSDLP and to undermine the strength of the Economists. As such he comes across as tactically flexible in the pursuit of a stable strategic goal: an RSDLP in which *Osvobozhdenie Truda* views would be dominant.

i) *Rabochaia Gazeta*

Evidence that *Rabochee Delo* directly approached Lenin, Iu O Martov and AN Potresov during the early months of 1900 is to be found in the papers of Martov, specifically in a draft of his autobiography *Zapiski Sotsial-Demokrata*.³²⁵ According to Martov, these three individuals returned from exile at this point with the impression that Economism had become the dominant trend in the Russian social democratic movement.³²⁶ They also took the view that it was precisely this dominance which explained the failure to establish new leading institutions for the RSDLP, despite a gap of almost two years since arrests had destroyed the old ones.³²⁷ Martov believed that the Economist tendency adopted a 'stagist' attitude towards party organisation, similar to their attitude towards agitation, which led them to oppose, at least for the

³²⁵ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 49-61

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, iv 49

³²⁷ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 23; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 302-3

time being, the creation of an RSDLP with strong leadership and an all-Russian newspaper, in favour of a federal association of regional and national social-democratic organisations.³²⁸ In other words, it was not the police, but the Economists who were preventing the re-establishment of the RSDLP central committee and *Rabochaia Gazeta*. This appears to be an accurate portrayal of the situation if we consider the organisation resolutions of the stillborn 'Second Congress' planned at Smolensk, which was to have taken place in April 1900, an event to which these negotiations were clearly related.³²⁹ These resolutions would have guaranteed maximum power to pre-existing regional organisations such as the Bund and the regional newspaper *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, which went on to form the ill-fated Union of Southern Associations and Committees. Such structures would hold the party's funds, presses, make all the important decisions and only they would be represented at future party congresses.³³⁰ The city organisations present at the First Congress would no longer have mandates.³³¹ This intended federal structure did not exclude the possibility of a re-launched *Rabochaia Gazeta*, but it did mean that the latter would be essentially a private enterprise, providing a service to the federation and being neither controlled nor particularly supported by it. The paper would not receive money from the regions, would not have its own printing press or distribution network and its editorial board would have no real authority over them.³³² In these inauspicious conditions, the editorial board could use the paper to persuade, but it was in no position to express a party line and had no real power.

³²⁸ «Дело в том, что после провалов 1898 года партийный центр исчез, и его невозобновление мы объяснили себе не столько конспиративно-техническими трудностями, сколько торжеством настроений «экономизма», который к процессу организационного объединения прилагал тот же метод «органической эволюции», как и к процессу перехода самой борьбы рабочих масс от более элементарных лозунгов в более сложным (т.н. «теория стадий»). С точки зрения экономистов, данному уровню движения соответствовала слабая федеративная связь между местными организациями, и на попытки спешить с созданием центрального аппарата руководства движением они склонны уже тогда были смотреть, как на «народовольчество» и «якобинизм», ведущие к отрыву от масс.» [*Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 51]

³²⁹ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 316-7

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, i 319-21 [article 3]

³³¹ *Ibid.*, i 321 [article 3 7. 7]

³³² *Ibid.*, i 322 [articles 4f, 5]

In all probability, these were the terms offered by the representatives of the Union Abroad when they met with Lenin and Potresov early in 1900 to offer them posts as the editors of a relaunched *Rabochaia Gazeta*. Martov recounts the incident in the following way:

Оказалось, что два представителя этого союза – П Теплов и Ц Копельзон («Тимофей», «Гришин», мой старый товарищ по Вильне), предприняли в это время поездку по России, чтобы склонить местные комитеты к организации второго партийного съезда. При этом выяснилось, что «эmissары» союза, знакомые с нашими планами, учитывают их и проектируют на предстоящем съезде предложит возобновление, в качестве официального органа партии, «Рабочей Газеты» с предоставлением нашей тройке её редакции. Об этом впервые заговорил в беседе с Ульяновым в Москве Х Лалаянц, лидер Екатеринославского комитета и редактор «Южного Рабочего», приехавший позондировать отношение северян к заграничному проекту съезда. Затем ещё до моего приезда в Псков, туда заехал сам Тимофей и в беседе с Лениным и Потресовым затронул ту же тему.³³³

The 'plans' to which Martov refers were the re-establishment of the RSDLP central committee and *Rabochaia Gazeta*, a plan that was apparently first formulated by the seventeen exiles when they signed Lenin's *Protest* against Kuskova.³³⁴ They did not, therefore, involve *Iskra*, any *Iskra*-like newspaper or any of its later organisational appendages:

Восстановить центральный комитет партии и её центральный орган «Рабочую Газету» - так, поэтому, формулировали мы наши требования к партии в 1899 г. ³³⁵

³³³ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 51-2: 'It turned out that two representatives of this Union - P Teplov and Ts. Kopel'zon ('Timofei', 'Grishin'), my old comrade from Vilno, were undertaking a trip around Russia at this time with the purpose of inclining local committees towards the organisation of a second party congress. Through this, it became clear that the 'emissaries' of the union, familiar with our plans, were studying them and planning to propose the re-establishment of *Rabochaia Gazeta* in the capacity of an official organ of the party, at the forthcoming congress, granting its editorial functions to our threesome. Kh. Lalaian, the leader of the Ekaterinoslav committee and editor of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* first began to speak about this with Lenin in Moscow, having arrived to sound out relations between the north towards the foreign Union's congress project. Then, still before my arrival in Pskov, Timofei arrived there and in a conversation with Lenin and Potresov touched on this theme.'

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, iv 51

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, iv 51: 'The restoration of the central committee of the party and of her central newspaper *Rabochaia Gazeta* – that is how we formulated our demands to the party in 1899'.

There is nothing to suggest that these 'demands' had changed by February of the following year. As such, it is clear that, before they became the younger half of the *Iskra-Zaria* editorial board, and before they had even considered the notion of *Iskra*, Lenin, Potresov and Martov were first of all considered for editorial posts in an entirely separate journalistic enterprise. This is not a popular view, either among Soviet or western scholars, but Martov's evidence is unambiguous. Not only this, we are also given the very powerful impression from what Martov writes that the very idea of the *troika* Lenin-Martov-Potresov actually originated from either *Iuzhnii Rabochii* or *Rabochee Delo*: in other words, it was not the demand of the revolutionary Marxists. *Rabochee Delo* seems the more likely candidate as a source for the idea, bearing in mind the motivation we discussed in the previous chapter, namely the desire to drive a wedge between the older and younger Plekhanovites. In the light of this surprising discovery, the question may also be posed of whether the *troika* was actually drawn together, in the first instance, as a result of their ideological compatibility, and whether it was not as a result of some other factor. The latter scenario is of course possible, but the fact that all three were revolutionary supporters of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* does not appear to have been coincidental. Lenin's letter to *Rabochaia Gazeta* from the previous autumn contains a clear objection to working with adherents of *Rabochaia Mysl'*.³³⁶ In this context, *Rabochee Delo*'s proposal of an 'all-revolutionary' editorial board would appear to be a concession to his demands. Whatever the reality, the whole incident illustrates how factors beyond the control of either Plekhanov or Lenin brought the original core of the *Iskra* group together, a view entirely incompatible with the view that the *Iskra* project was the product of a detailed plan hatched by Lenin whilst in Shushenskoe.³³⁷ On the contrary, it is easy to see how the incident could simply be perceived as another Economist manoeuvre by *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, thus provoking its suspicions that the younger trio were betraying revolutionary Marxism for the sake of posts in the RSDLP.

In this connection, the response of the *troika* to their proposed nomination is

³³⁶ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, iv 207-9

³³⁷ L Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism*, 117; J LH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 67; R Service, *Lenin, A Political Life*, i 77, 80-1

also quite intriguing. Martov writes:

На первый взгляд предложение казалось маккиавелистским: нас как бы хотели оторвать от Группы «Освобождение Труда», солидарность свою с которой мы торжественно провозгласили, введя нас в «легальные» рамки партийно-уставных отношений, затруднить нам союз с этой Группой. Но ни Ленин, ни Потресов не были склонны сообщая мне о беседах с Копельзоном, объяснять действия «Союза» исключительно военной хитростью. Напротив, они видели в них признание силы той позиции, которую мы приобрели в партии, и готовность идти нам навстречу. А так как и деятели «Союза» понимали, что партия немыслима без Группы «Освобождение Труда», то было очевидно, что не перессорить нас с ней они хотят, но скорее проложить нашими руками мост к примирению с ней.³³⁸

Here, Martov seems to have hit the nail on the head. The behaviour of *Rabochee Delo* could undoubtedly be described with the terms 'Machiavellian' and 'military cunning': both their behaviour in relation to Lenin's *Tasks of the Social-Democrats* and the letter in the *Vademecum* suggest that his suspicions are justified. Yet it seems that Lenin cannot see it in this way. Despite *Rabochee Delo*'s troublemaking manipulation of his words the previous spring, and the obvious attempt on this occasion to 'set him against' (*peressorit*) Axelrod, Lenin is here apparently convinced that *Rabochee Delo* was not trying to do the same thing again, only this time using more sophisticated tactics. At first glance, he seems convinced of Kopel'zon's good faith as a result of merely *verbal* assurances that the *Rabochee Delo* followers are not trying to drive *Osvobozhdenie Truda* out of the party. This is despite the fact that, as we saw in the previous chapter, it was at times hard to credit the sincerity of some of *Rabochee Delo*'s statements, not least their remarks on Lenin's *Protest*. Whilst it is of course possible that these incidents represented the behaviour of just one rogue individual in the group and it is possible that the rest were honest, if

³³⁸ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 52: 'At first glance, the plan seemed to be a Machiavellian chess move: it was as if they wanted to separate us from *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, solidarity with whom we proudly declared and, leading us into a 'legal' framework of party-constitutional relations, to hamper our union with this group. But neither Lenin nor Potresov were inclined, talking to me about the conversations with Kopel'zon, to explain the action of the Union exclusively as the result of military cunning. On the contrary, they saw in it an admission of the strength of that position we had acquired in the party and a willingness to come to terms with us. And seeing how the Union activists understood that the party was unthinkable without *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, it was obvious that they didn't want to set us against them, but instead wanted to build a bridge of reconciliation with them using our hands.'

this was the case, then there is fair chance that this 'rogue' was Kopel'zon himself, as is evidenced by Plekhanov's exposure of him in the *Vademecum*.

It is possible that Lenin is being a little more subtle than first appearances suggest, and that he is not entirely ignorant of these, or other similar incidents. We say this because Martov, in a rather measured way, observes that Lenin and Potresov did not think *Rabochee Delo* were motivated 'exclusively' by military cunning. This implies that they recognised Kopel'zon's dubious motives, but decided that these motives were not the only factor to consider. This brings us to the question of Lenin and Potresov's attitude to Kopel'zon's idea that the younger Plekhanovites should act as peacemakers between *Rabochee Delo* and *Osvobozhdenie Truda*. It is hard to decide whether Lenin considered this proposition to be sincere, but it does seem likely that regardless of the perceived sincerity of Kopel'zon, Lenin and Potresov subscribed to the general idea of such a peacemaking project. In other words they, like Kopel'zon wanted to put an end to the émigré dispute. This is an intriguing idea, because one obvious advantage Kopel'zon would gain from such a reconciliation would be that Plekhanov's criticism of his integrity would stop: his reputation would fare better if the dispute were brought to an end. Perhaps this is what Lenin means when he appears to say that Kopel'zon's approach was based on the strength of the Plekhanovites in the party. This is a strange remark in so far as all other circumstances point to the collapse of revolutionary Marxism in the RSDLP at this stage. Economism was dominant in St Petersburg through its irregular newspaper *Rabochaia Mysl'* and its trade unionist 'Workers Organisation'.³³⁹ Its organisational preferences were clearly expressed in the documents of the Smolensk Congress attempt, which themselves appear to have been put together with the help of *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, a circumstance strongly suggesting Economist activity in the south.³⁴⁰ Economism was also dominant in the émigré organisation. Against this, revolutionary Marxism had no strong points and Kopel'zon appeared to have absolutely no cause to 'come to terms with' (*idti nam navstrechu*) its representatives. As such, it can seem that Lenin was either misinformed at this stage or was perhaps bluffing in order both to calm Martov's apprehensions, and to win the

³³⁹ Ibid., iv 53-4; VP Akimov, 'The Second Congress of the RSDLP', and 'Report of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats, in *Vladimir Akimov on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism*, 149-84

³⁴⁰ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 316-22

maximum number of concessions from Kopel'zon. However, this interpretation might be undermined if it could be shown that Lenin understood that Kopel'zon felt under significant pressure as a result of the *Vademecum* revelations. In the absence of further evidence concerning this incident it seems reasonable to assume that all these factors played some role.

Whatever the case, there was undoubtedly willingness on the part of Lenin and his colleagues to accept the editorial responsibilities proposed by the Union Abroad, even if this acceptance involved numerous conditions, which the Lenin trio presented to Kopel'zon. We suspect that this willingness was partially motivated by an awareness of the independent role *Rabochaia Gazeta* would play in the RSDLP, if the surviving documents of the Smolensk congress attempt can be seen as an indication of relations Kopel'zon proposed between the newspaper and the party.³⁴¹ No party programme had yet been agreed and the draft party constitution was federalistic, all of which meant that the editors would have been able to do more or less as they pleased. This it would seem that Martov's fear of being 'tied hand and foot' by an overbearing central committee dominated by Economists was almost certainly unfounded.³⁴² On the contrary, it would appear that Lenin correctly saw this in this absence of control a glorious opportunity to agitate for the revolutionary Marxist world view, using *Rabochaia Gazeta* as a mouthpiece whilst exploiting the propaganda value of its official status.³⁴³ In this sense, it seems that the function of the conditions was not to guarantee the formal independence of the editorial board, as this had already been assumed by all sides, so much as to satisfy certain political qualms the Lenin group had about making a deal with the Economists, whilst also securing every opportunity to broadcast their fundamental loyalty to *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, trying at the same time to secure maximum support for its views. Accordingly, the first condition was that the nominated editors would seek mandates from *Osvobozhdenie Truda* to act as their representatives at forthcoming congress, before which they would not take up their posts.³⁴⁴ In this way, any possible misunderstanding concerning the relations

³⁴¹ Ibid., i 319 [article 1]

³⁴² *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 54

³⁴³ Ibid., iv 52-3

³⁴⁴ Ibid., iv 54: «Обсудив всесторонне вопрос, мы решили принять приглашение на съезд,

between the editorial group and the Economists could be cleared up. In addition, during this time, the revolutionaries would prepare a 'declaration of faith' expressing Plekhanovite principles which would be used as a sort of election manifesto by the editors at the congress.³⁴⁵ This may have been designed as a preventative measure against attempts by elements in the RSDLP to force the editorial group away from revolutionary Marxism, but primarily it appears to have been another way of distancing themselves from the Economists whilst accepting what was on offer. Finally, prior to the congress, the editors would make a 'personal tour' of all the leading social-democratic groups likely to be present, in order to discuss the content of this declaration and to seek its approval. They stated that if time were not possible for such a tour, then the editors would oppose congress either adopting an official party newspaper or taking any other 'principled decisions' - a phrase which presumably refers to the party programme - and that instead, at their own risk they would create a private newspaper that would host a discussion on the main tasks of the party.³⁴⁶

The history of these negotiations leads to the clear conclusion that it was in an attempt to negotiate the conflict between the Economists and *Osvobozhdenie Truda* that the concept which later became *Iskra* first emerged. Prior to the negotiations with Kopel'zon, the demand of the group around Lenin appears to have been the re-establishment of *Rabochaia Gazeta* in the capacity of an official party newspaper. Only in the course of these discussions does the idea of a newspaper *without* an official status in the party, and the assumption that the RSDLP could continue without

предполагавшийся не позже, чем через два месяца, и сейчас же списаться с Группой «Освобождение Труд», предложив ей прислать нам свой мандат на этот съезд.»

³⁴⁵ Ibid., iv 54: «На съезд мы должны были представить обстоятельное «исповедание веры», в котором отчетливо были бы выражены революционные задачи партии как мы их понимаем, и коллективную свою кандидатуру в редакторы партийного органа мы должны были принять только на основе утверждения съездом этой программы. »

³⁴⁶ Ibid., iv 54 «Если, в виду краткости оставшегося до съезда времени и невозможности личным объездом подготовить руководящие круги местных работников к принятию нашей платформы, съезд окажется неподготовленным к выработке стройной программы действия, мы будем настаивать на том, чтобы съезд никак принципиальных связывающих решений не принимал, официального органа партии не восстанавливал, а предоставил нам, на наш страх и риск, открыть в нашем органе обсуждение очередных задач партии. »

either a party programme or an official newspaper emerge. The Lenin group seems to have been forced into this position on this basis of a fear, stated by Martov but strangely denied by Lenin, that the RSDLP was at this stage a stronghold of Economism, on the basis of which they concluded that it would be a mistake for them to accept official responsibilities. It seems they understood that they could have been put in essentially the same situation as the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* group following the earlier change in the status of the Union Abroad, in the sense that, in terms of the party statutes there would be no problem with their editing its newspaper, they would sooner or later have been put under pressure to collaborate with Economists and to take responsibility for the publication of their views. In so far as the congress had yet to be arranged, and their proposed tour had not been started, this idea which became *Iskra* comes across as something of a 'plan B' or a worse-case scenario. This leads to the conclusion that the idea might have originated with the rather more pessimistic Martov rather than Lenin, the latter being the one who almost certainly conceived the idea of a tour of the committees, confident of his ability to win them over, possibly excessively so. Thus it is possible to see how, contrary to numerous accounts stressing how Lenin was the sole original author of projects such as *Iskra* and that his peculiar genius consisted in putting pre-conceived plans into action, Lenin and his allies in fact developed even their most important and lasting ideas out of particular concrete circumstances rather than grandiose, pre-conceived and inflexible plans.

ii) *The Declarations of the Editorial Board of Iskra*

Nothing came of the plans for a second RSDLP congress owing to yet another wave of arrests, and as a result there was no longer any question of *Rabochaia Gazeta* being revived.³⁴⁷ With this failure, Martov, Potresov and Lenin were free to carry out their reserve plan of a private journalistic enterprise, an option they probably considered preferable to official responsibilities. We say this because the political problems overshadowing the discussions with Kopel'zon, the conflict between *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and *Rabochee Delo*, got worse in the months following these discussions. If the RSDLP congress failed to materialise in April 1900, the Second

³⁴⁷ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 316-7

Congress of the Union Abroad did, and as has already been noted, its main event was a walkout by *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and about a dozen supporters, who then formed a rival émigré organisation, 'The Revolutionary Organisation 'Sotsial-Demokrat''.³⁴⁸ Thus, the possibility of Russia's revolutionary Marxists actually breaking with the RSDLP appeared to have become a reality. Unfortunately there is only the occasional clue as to how Lenin viewed this event, which took place whilst he was still in Russia, apparently busying himself with making useful contacts in various towns.³⁴⁹ Most important is a letter to Krupskaya written some time after his arrival in western Europe in late July 1900.³⁵⁰ Its most significant feature is its excited observation that 'a completely wrong idea of *Vademecum* prevails in Russia as a result of the cock-and-bull stories of the *Rabochee Delo* supporters'.³⁵¹ Apparently correcting a previous impression he held, he then describes the anti-Plekhanov element in the Union Abroad as 'banal Economists', whilst describing their methods as dishonest and given towards intrigue.³⁵² He argues that it is this mode of behaviour which justified the exposures in the *Vademecum*, referring to manipulation of his own *Tasks of the Social Democrats*.³⁵³ In short, he informs Krupskaya that the letter Plekhanov published in this pamphlet were a true reflection of émigré life, a statement which corroborates our argument that *Rabochee Delo*, prior to the split were essentially a Janus-faced grouping. More significantly still, the fact that he writes this with the zeal of a new convert in a letter sent after his emigration in July 1900 strongly implies that he only acquired these opinions *after* travelling to western Europe and that earlier, whilst in Russia, he had held rather different ones. In other words, the letter strongly suggests that up to this point he was probably quite sceptical about the split in the emigration and that he was unwilling to take sides with *Osvobozhdenie Truda* in a faction fight, even if he was in sympathy with their general views. Thus it is possible to conclude that at the meeting with Kopel'zon, Lenin really had been somewhat naive in accepting the offer of editorial posts and that he had, as Martov had feared, underestimated the 'Machiavellianism' of his opponent. Not only that, Lenin

³⁴⁸ Ibid., i 304-6

³⁴⁹ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 42-6

³⁵⁰ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 44-7

³⁵¹ Ibid., xxxiv 44

³⁵² Ibid., xxxiv 44-5

³⁵³ Ibid., xxxiv 46

subsequently admitted his mistake.

Further evidence for a change in Lenin's estimation of Economism at around this time comes from probably the earliest surviving document directly connected to *Iskra*, the *Draft Declaration of the Editorial Board of Iskra and Zaria*.³⁵⁴ This was probably written shortly after news of the RSDLP congress's failure had been received and in its political positions it suggests a desire to hedge a number of questions on which Plekhanov took a much more decisive stance. It was clearly written before Lenin's arrival in Europe and this draft was almost certainly taken by Lenin to the conference with *Osvobozhdenie Truda* in August 1900, which Lenin wrote about in the short unpublished narrative *How the Spark Was Nearly Extinguished*.³⁵⁵ His account shows how this series of meetings involved some extremely sharp exchanges between Plekhanov and Lenin, which seem to have bewildered Lenin as much as they hurt him. On the basis of Lenin's version of events alone, the conflict has been explained as the result of a personality clash in both Soviet and in western accounts.³⁵⁶ However, both the letter to Krupskaya suggesting a change of heart in relation to the conflict in the Union Abroad and a comparison of Lenin's *Draft* with his revised version, which was produced in the light of discussions with Plekhanov, suggest that there was actually a political content to their disagreement involving, among other things, their respective characterisations of the *Rabochee Delo* journal and its followers.³⁵⁷ Indeed, this conflict appears to be one of the clearest cases of the 'antithesis' we spoke of in the previous chapter. Lenin on this occasion clearly opposes Plekhanov in the name of RSDLP unity despite his basic identification with the latter's revolutionary Marxist political outlook.

It seems that the starting point for Lenin's *Draft Declaration of the Editorial Board of Iskra and Zaria* was a criticism of *Rabochee Delo*'s failed strategy for drawing all those organisations declaring their adherence to the RSDLP into a

³⁵⁴ Ibid., iv 320-330

³⁵⁵ Ibid., iv 333-49

³⁵⁶ R Service, Lenin, *A Political Life*, i 83; PN Pospelov, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, 75; J LH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 69

³⁵⁷ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, iv 351-6

common party structure:

What plan of activity must we adopt to revive the Party on the firmest possible basis? Some comrades (even some groups and organisations) are of the opinion that in order to achieve this we must resume the practice of electing the central Party body and instruct it to resume the publication of the Party organ. We consider such a plan to be a false one or, at all events, a hazardous one.³⁵⁸

In place of this strategy, Lenin argues that:

To establish and consolidate the Party means to establish and consolidate unity among all Russian Social-Democrats; such unity cannot be decreed, it cannot be brought about by a decision, say, of a meeting of representatives; it must be worked for.³⁵⁹

‘Working for unity’, in Lenin’s view involves ‘common party literature’³⁶⁰, common both in the sense that it is read and written by all sections of the movement, and in the sense that it ‘must express all shades of views and opinions prevailing among social democrats’, with the caveat that they consider themselves part of the party and acknowledge its programme.³⁶¹ Given that an RSDLP programme does not exist at this stage, this statement is rather ambiguous. It gives every reason to assume that *Iskra* and *Zaria* should open their columns to all pro-RSDLP elements. Lenin’s reasoning appears to be as follows. In consonance with the editorial group’s conditions concerning their acceptance of official editorial positions, particularly its demand for a ‘personal tour’ of the leading local social-democratic groups, Lenin issues a protest against over-hasty decisions made in the absence of an all-sided preliminary debate. Such procedures in his view simply paper over disagreements rather than genuinely resolve them. ‘Unity’ decided by a vote would never genuinely convince the minority that the majority was right on a matter of principle. On the other hand, a process of debate in pamphlets and newspapers, accompanied by the presentation of all relevant background information, might help settle differences in a manner satisfactory to all sides, actually persuading one section of the internally-

³⁵⁸ Ibid., iv 323

³⁵⁹ Ibid., iv 323

³⁶⁰ Ibid., iv 323

³⁶¹ Ibid., iv 323

dissenting party of the correctness of the other's views.³⁶² Thus the basic function of the *Iskra* newspaper as a clearing house for different views inside the RSDLP is outlined, albeit one with a broadly Marxist editorial viewpoint.³⁶³ In this sense, one gets the idea that Lenin had noticed *Rabochee Delo*'s failure to deliver its promised debate on the party programme, complete with star contributions from Germany, and that he intends that *Iskra* and *Zaria* should take on this responsibility, albeit with a possibly more 'Russian' emphasis.

Given this borrowing of *Rabochee Delo*'s clothes, it is not hard to understand why Plekhanov might have become suspicious of Lenin. For all its 'unofficial' status, the implication is that *Iskra* would be a publication serving the entire RSDLP at a time when the disorganised remnants of the revolutionary Marxists, recently withdrawn from the Union Abroad, lacked a journal of their own. It posed the question of how *Iskra* could seriously advance the position of revolutionary Marxism whilst at the same time acting as the supposedly impartial chair of an all-sided debate. Plekhanov's suspicion that Lenin did not want to fight the Economists even though an acrimonious split had actually taken place can only have been heightened by the latter's use in the draft of ambiguous and self-contradictory formulations, somewhat

³⁶² Ibid., iv 324 : 'The character of our task naturally determines the programme for conducting our publications. They must devote considerable space to theoretical questions, i.e., to the general theory of Social-Democracy and its application to Russian conditions. The urgent need to promote a wide discussion of these questions at the present time in particular is beyond all doubt and requires no further explanation after what has been said above. It goes without saying that questions of general theory are inseparably connected with the need to supply information about the history and the present state of the working-class movement in the west.' 'The discussion of questions of theory and policy will be connected with the drafting of a Party programme, the necessity for which was recognised at the congress in 1898'

³⁶³ Ibid., iv 326-7: 'Here the question naturally arises: if the proposed publications are to serve the purpose of uniting all Russian Social-Democrats and mustering them into a single party, they must reflect all shades of opinion, all local specific features, and all the various practical methods. How can we combine the varying points of view with the maintenance of a uniform editorial policy for these publications? Should these publications be merely a jumble of various views, or should they have an independent and quite definite tendency? We hold to the second view and hope that an organ having a definite tendency will prove quite suitable (as we shall show below), both for the purpose of expressing various viewpoints; and for comradely polemics between contributors.'

reminiscent of *Rabochee Delo*'s own confused thinking. For example, in his *Vademecum*, by way of introduction, Plekhanov wrote:

В нашей заграничной социал-демократической литературе с некоторого времени ведется довольно странный для непосвященного читателя спор, предметом которого служит вопрос о том, существует или не существует в молодой русской социал-демократии направление, известное под именем экономического. По мнению одной из спорящих сторон, П. Аксельрода, выражающего взгляд группы «Освобождение Труда», - такое направление не только существует, но, при известных условиях может оказать очень вредное влияние на дальнейшее развитие нашей партии. Другая сторона, - редакция quasi-периодического издания «Рабочее Дело», - не хочет согласиться с П. Аксельродом. Она думает, что его мнение лишено всякого основания.³⁶⁴

This is an admirably clear definition of the problem as he sees it, and as we saw in the previous chapter, Plekhanov goes on to show that this 'economic tendency' includes elements among *Rabochee Delo* closest supporters. However, this estimate was not apparently shared by Lenin. If he appeared to have finally recognised that the influence of revolutionary Marxism had declined in the Russian underground, he did not appear to blame this disappearance on the emergence of ideological alternatives to Marxism. Accordingly, rather than defining the problem as one of 'tendencies', he writes in his *Draft Declaration* of a 'disunity' that has the effect of

threatening to divert the movement to a false path: narrow practicalism, detached from the theoretical clarification of the movement as a whole, may destroy the contact between socialism and the revolutionary movement in Russia, on the one hand, and the spontaneous working-class movement, on the other.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia*, xii 3: 'For some time, an argument sufficiently strange for the unenlightened reader has been taking place in our overseas social-democratic literature, the subject of which is the question of whether there exists, in the young Russian social democracy, a tendency known by the name of 'economic'. According to the opinion of one of the disputing sides, P Axelrod, expressing the opinion of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group - such a tendency not only exists but under certain circumstances could exercise a very harmful influence on the future development of our party. The other side - the editorial board of the quasi-periodical publication *Rabochee Delo* does not want to agree with P Axelrod. It thinks that this opinion is deprived of all basis.'

³⁶⁵ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, iv 322

This statement seems confused in so far as it is hard to image how the impersonal force of ‘disunity’ can in itself lead the movement down any ‘path’. It is surely in fact the sign of different contending elements trying to draw it in different, opposing directions. Lenin continues with the following:

That this danger is not merely imaginary is proved by such literary productions as the *Credo* - which has already called forth legitimate protest and condemnation - and the *Separate Supplement to “Rabochaia Mysl”* (September 1899). That supplement has brought out most markedly the trend that permeates the whole of *Rabochaia Mysl*; in it a particular trend in Russian Social-Democracy has begun to manifest itself, a trend that may cause real harm and that must be combated.³⁶⁶

Despite what he has just written, Lenin now appears to more or less echo the position of Axelrod and Plekhanov in identifying some potentially harmful ‘trend’ already emerging within Russian social democracy. He now identifies this ‘trend’ exclusively with an open revisionist challenge to Marxism, in the form of Kuskova’s *Credo* and the more extreme advocates of anti-intellectual ‘narrow practicalism’ *Rabochaia Mysl*’.³⁶⁷ Both of these are outspokenly and consciously, as opposed to implicitly anti-Marxist. By contrast, silence is maintained on the question of *Rabochee Delo*, despite the exposure of its links with revisionism by Plekhanov in the *Vademecum* and despite the fact that *Osvobozhdenie Truda* had by this stage broken off relations with them. Then, in the very next paragraph, Lenin once again directly contradicts not only Axelrod’s view, but his own previous statement:

It is still premature to judge how deep the cleavage is, and how far the formation of a special trend is probable (at the moment we are not in the least inclined to answer these questions in the affirmative and we have not yet lost hope of our being able to work *together*), but it would be more harmful to close our eyes to the gravity of the situation than to exaggerate the cleavage, and we heartily welcome the resumption of literary activity on the part of the Emancipation of Labour group, and the struggle it has begun against the attempts to distort and vulgarise Social-Democracy.³⁶⁸

The conclusion: a harmful trend exists, yet it does not exist. If it does exist, it exists according to a narrower definition than Plekhanov would prefer. This ridiculous

³⁶⁶ Ibid., iv 322

³⁶⁷ Ibid., iv 322

³⁶⁸ Ibid., iv 322

switching of opinions rather well expresses Lenin's diplomatically delicate and in fact self-contradictory position. Eager to appeal to two sides who have fallen out - *Rabochee Delo* on the one hand, *Osvobozhdenie Truda* on the other - he incorporates the views of both, quite absurdly, into the same document. This ill-thought out attempt seems destined to fail not simply because Plekhanov had by this stage probably lost all hope of 'working together' with *Rabochee Delo*. Additional questions running through Plekhanov's mind must surely have been the degree to which the political thinking of Lenin actually differed from that of *Rabochee Delo*. Both were speaking in positive terms about an RSDLP unity predicated on all theoretical tendencies. Both had proclaimed their support for Marxism, whilst trying to initiate a broad ranging debate on the political character of the RSDLP in their respective journals. Both were given to theoretically ambiguous, confusing and poorly worded statements that seemed to serve ever more complex and bewildering inter-factional intrigues. Both denied the existence of Economism as a definite ideological trend. It seems safe to conclude that perceptions such as these explain Plekhanov's differences with the *Iskra* group at the August 1900 meeting, compounding his initial scepticism towards 'unity' which would naturally have emerged in the wake of the split.

Bearing in mind these factors, there can be little doubt that behind Plekhanov's angry reception of Lenin and Potresov at the August meeting there was the aim of revising the *Draft Declaration* so as to make it more in consonance with *Osvobozhdenie Truda* views.³⁶⁹ There can also be no doubt that his strategy worked, as can be seen from the final version of the *Declaration*. In it, *Rabochee Delo* is explicitly criticised for taking one of the positions that Lenin himself took in the *Draft*:

Completely untrue are the assertions of *Rabochee Delo* to the effect that the *Credo* merely represents the opinions of individuals, that the trend represented by *Rabochaia Mysl'* expresses merely the confusion of mind and the tactlessness of its editors, and not a special tendency in the progress of the Russian working-class movement.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ Ibid., iv 335

³⁷⁰ Ibid., iv 353

This said, Lenin still does not state that *Rabochee Delo* is involved in this 'special tendency', something which Plekhanov had first proven theoretically, whilst the existence of the 'Sotsial-Demokrat' group proved it in practice. Only the outspoken anti-Marxist tendencies, Kuskova and *Rabochaia Mysl'* are identified as 'the enemy'. On the other hand, Lenin does seem to have moved from a position in which he had simply expressed differences with certain organisational methods of this 'enemy' to a criticism of its general world view. Thus we see a strengthened statement of the ideological aims of *Iskra* in the final version of the *Declaration*. In the draft, Lenin had defined the main problem of the Russian social-democratic movement as 'its state of disunity and amateur character', in so far as 'traditions are not established and continuity is not maintained'.³⁷¹ In other words he emphasised organisational weaknesses almost to the exclusion of everything else. By contrast, a new element of criticism was introduced into the final version. Alongside the question of organisational disunity, comes that of 'ideological wavering', identified with both revisionism and, to use Lenin's revised formula, 'the so-called 'economist' trend'.³⁷² In the second version, it is this wavering, and not the poor communication between social democratic groups that is causing the organisational difficulties. In this sense, the blame for Economism as a whole is shifted from practical underground workers to conscious ideologues, definitely including *Rabochaia Mysl'*, but possibly also *Rabochee Delo*. It is the lack of a revolutionary perspective that leads to organisational problems, not the other way round. A new goal for the paper is therefore introduced:

solid ideological unity which should eliminate discordance and confusion that—let us be frank!—reign among Russian Social-Democrats at the present time. This ideological unity must be consolidated by a Party programme.³⁷³

Rather than defining a non-existent party programme as the basis for an exchange of views as Lenin tried to argue in the draft, the programme now re-emerges as the indisputable end point of the discussion. A strong party must be formed which not only 'fights under the banner of revolutionary social democracy', but under 'the

³⁷¹ Ibid., iv 321

³⁷² Ibid., iv 352

³⁷³ Ibid., iv 354

single banner of revolutionary social democracy'. Non-revolutionary ideas are explicitly rejected, and not only in the form of individual opinions, such as that of Kuskova, or definite publications, such as *Rabochaia Mysl'*. Though the mode of expression is indirect, it seems that Lenin wants these elements driven out of the RSDLP. As such, it seems that *Iskra*, rather than acting as a force for compromise, itself starts to represent a special 'trend', and accordingly, the reference to the possibility of 'working together' with non-revolutionaries is removed.

Through our comparison of the draft with the final *Declaration of the Editorial Board of Iskra* we get the sense that the conflict between Lenin and Plekhanov had its roots in two different conceptions of Economism. Lenin, prior to the meeting with Plekhanov appears to view the phenomenon primarily as a feature of raw, untrained activists with a low level of political understanding, whereas Plekhanov sees it as a definite political tendency in Russian social-democracy with a leadership, an apparatus and means of consciously propagating its views and of spreading its influence within the movement. On this question it is absolutely clear that Plekhanov is the one in the right, a conclusion we can draw not only from a general survey of the Russian social-democracy at this time, but also from Lenin's private admission that he was in the wrong to Krupskaya, not to mention the fact that he modified the *Declaration* in the direction of Plekhanov's views. However, this is not end of the matter to the extent that, if Lenin conceded to Plekhanov's theoretical analysis of Economism, this did not imply approval of the latter's practical method of dealing with it. At the Second Congress of the Union Abroad, *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and its sympathisers had broken with the émigré organisation despite the fact that it was an official RSDLP body, a decision which invited the conclusion that they had also broken with the party as a whole. Thus one gains the impression that, in Plekhanov's view, the political apparatus of Economism was the entire RSDLP, and not just *Rabochee Delo* and the Union Abroad. Whatever the truth of this idea, Plekhanov's decision did not appear to represent a particularly sophisticated level of tactical thinking. So long as they remained part of the RSDLP they had a credible claim to input into the party programme and its leading journals owing to their superior learning and scholarship. This fact was reflected in Kopel'zon's remark during the negotiations with the Lenin group that the RSDLP was 'unthinkable'

without *Osvobozhdenie Truda*. Accordingly, they could still have done much to disrupt the dominant tendency in the RSDLP which, prior to the split, appears to have sensed the danger of such a possibility. As was shown previously, *Rabochee Delo* indicated its intention to exclude *Osvobozhdenie Truda* from any discussions on the RSDLP programme, an incident suggesting that if *Rabochee Delo* never had the intention of expelling the venerable Plekhanovites from the RSDLP, they were certainly prepared to marginalise them to whatever degree proved politically possible. Given this context, the split of April 1900 simply gave *Rabochee Delo* rather more than they could have reasonably hoped for, and made it far easier to begin discussions on the party programme without Plekhanov, and with whatever figures from the revisionist and Economist tendencies it saw fit. A far more effective way of opposing this serious challenge to revolutionary Marxism must surely have been to demand the right to contribute articles to *Rabochee Delo* whilst refusing to take editorial responsibilities for the publication in general. By becoming ordinary contributors whilst leaving the Economists to do most of the technical work of the journal they could have consistently frustrated their opponents by providing far more worthwhile theoretical articles than the derivative efforts of Krichevksy. This would have represented a particular form of power without responsibility, especially if *Osvobozhdenie Truda* had put a case for being given the status of a minority faction, which Kopel'zon at least would have felt obliged to accept. This could have given *Osvobozhdenie Truda* the right to broadcast its own separate views on any number of questions, to raise its own funds, and to have at least one of its supporters working in the administration of the Union alongside Kopel'zon, a situation which was discussed in September 1899. Unfortunately, Plekhanov's also preferred to assert his proprietorship over the Union's printing press at this point, the final consequences of which were, in the words of Lenin to Krupskaya, that 'things *literally* came to the pitch of brawling, hysteria, and so on and so forth.'³⁷⁴

In the light of such clumsiness, the fact that Plekhanov had a more correct understanding of Economism than Lenin can seem to be a secondary matter. The question of how to reassert the authority of the revolutionary Marxists within Russian social-democracy does not appear to have been one towards which he had devoted

³⁷⁴ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 45

sufficient thought. By contrast Lenin, even in his flawed draft of the *Declaration* had attempted to sketch out a political strategy for how this might be achieved using the *Iskra* newspaper both as a host for a debate on the party programme, and a general notice board for the entire RSDLP. In the months which followed, he refined his ideas in this sense, the result of which was that by the time the first issue of *Iskra* appeared, the newspaper had acquired a definite commitment to reuniting the Plekhanov group with the RSDLP. We will examine this stand taken by Lenin, which continued to distinguish him from *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and 'Sotsial-Democrat', both of whom continued to show scepticism towards the idea of a *rapprochement* with *Rabochee Delo*, in the next section. During the first ten months of *Iskra*'s existence, Lenin's reunification policy passed through a several distinct phases, each of which corresponded to a change in circumstances beyond its author's control. Thus we shall see once again that Lenin's tactics were not determined by any detailed advance plan, but were highly flexible even if all the variations were directed towards the same clearly understood goal.

iii) Lenin's 'reinsertion' of the Plekhanovites back into the RSDLP

Following the August 1900 meeting, the first step in Lenin's strategy was to obtain a formal agreement between *Iskra* and *Osvobozhdenie Truda*. The final version of this agreement defined the 'Russian group of Social Democrats' - clearly Martov, Lenin and Potresov - as the publishers and editors of *Iskra* and *Zaria*, whereas the Plekhanov group simply 'participated in the editorial work' of the enterprise.³⁷⁵ Any article due for publication which touched on 'matters of principle or special significance' would be forwarded in advance of publication to *Osvobozhdenie Truda* for approval and recommendations. Where approval was not received or recommendations were turned down, the Plekhanovites would be invited to submit its own 'special opinion' either as individuals or collectively.³⁷⁶ Through these statutes, the *Iskra-Zaria* editorial board was able to retain a separate public identity from *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, despite their very close practical collaboration. In fact, in every

³⁷⁵ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, iv 350, 454

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, iv 454

other respect the two groups acted as one, an arrangement expressed in frequent correspondence concerning the main articles in the paper; the contribution of signed and unsigned articles by Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich; and a degree of practical involvement in the venture on the part of Zasulich.³⁷⁷

The main purpose of this formal separation was to allow the two groups to express different opinions on the question of the split, a difference which is noticeable in the very first issue of *Iskra*. The position taken is clearly one inspired by diplomacy. On the one hand, Lenin echoes what appears to be Plekhanov's view in the preface to his *Vademecum*, identifying the problem with *Rabochee Delo* as one of 'denying the existence of' Economism:

The most important thing, from our point of view, is the fact that *Rabochee Delo* was in the wrong in this controversy; it erroneously denied the existence of an "economist" trend; it advocated the wrong tactics of ignoring the extremism of this trend and of refraining from combating it openly.³⁷⁸

This clearly represents a conscious toning down by the editorial collective of both Lenin's and Plekhanov's real views. If in the 'preface' to his *Vademecum*, Plekhanov makes exactly the same accusation, the documents included in it show that *Rabochee Delo* takes a more or less sympathetic attitude not just to Economism, but also to Kuskova and Prokopovich's anti-RSDLP revisionism. Equally, Lenin is quite prepared to describe the journal *itself* as a group of 'base economists' in a private letter: he does not believe they are merely expressing an overly tolerant attitude to these Economists. We can guess that the fact that his criticism is so mild probably reflected a feeling on the part of Lenin that Plekhanov, in his *Vademecum* made a tactical error. This was partially in the sense that it provoked a split at a time when the Plekhanovites were still too weak to form a significant separate organisation, and partially because the publication of private letters permitted a retaliatory protest about Plekhanov's methods which could draw away attention from the real causes of the disagreement. Thus emerges the possibility that Lenin's strategy at this stage revolves

³⁷⁷ e.g. PB Axelrod, *Iskra* 1 (Dec. 1900) 1-2; VI Zasulich, *Iskra* 3 (Apr. 1901) 6-7; GV Plekhanov, *Iskra* 1 (Dec. 1900) 7-8 & *Iskra* 5 (Jun. 1901) 2-4; Pavlovich, *Pis'mo k tovarishcham o vtorom s"ezde RSDRP*, (Geneva: RSDRP, 1904) 16-7; *Leninskii Sbornik*, iii 50-439; NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 51-4

³⁷⁸ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, iv 378

around trying to repair the damage done by Plekhanov in émigré affairs. This impression is confirmed by what Lenin writes next:

For this reason, while not denying the service which *Rabochee Delo* has rendered in publishing literature and organising its distribution, we refuse to recognise either section of the split organisation as the representative of our Party abroad. This question must remain open until our next Party congress. The official representatives of Russian Social-Democracy abroad at the present time are the Russian members of the permanent international Committee set up in Paris by the International Socialist Congress in the autumn of this year. Russia has two representatives on this Committee: G. V. Plekhanov and B. Krichevsky (one of the editors of *Rabochee Delo*). Until the two groups of Russian Social-Democracy become reconciled or come to an agreement, we intend to conduct all our business pertaining to the representation of Russia with G. V. Plekhanov.³⁷⁹

There are three main points of interest here. Firstly, there are a few words of recognition for *Rabochee Delo*'s 'services' to Russian social-democracy: Lenin probably has in mind at this point the attempt to organise the RSDLP congress and the fact that it was prepared to host a debate on the party programme, whilst tactfully gliding over the utter failure of both projects. This might not seem very significant, but the line did provoke a protest from Plekhanov, an incident which rather well illustrates the difference in approach of the two men.³⁸⁰ The second point is the refusal to recognise either the Union Abroad or 'Sotsial-Demokrat' as 'the official representative of the party abroad', in other words as the émigré section of the RSDLP. This very much *looks* like a form of even handed treatment which would further annoy Plekhanov, but in fact it does not yield a protest from him. This is because Lenin's formulation here represents something of a favour to him. Most observers, given the way he and his supporters walked out of the Union Abroad would surely have assumed that the latter remained the official RSDLP organisation whereas, by virtue of both its size and the manner of its departure from the main group that 'Sotsial-Demokrat' had separated from the RSDLP. However, Lenin denies this, using what authority he has as the paper's editor in an attempt to salvage Plekhanov's political position and to pave the way for some kind of reversal of the disastrous walk-out. Accordingly, Lenin speculates on the possibility of the

³⁷⁹ Ibid., iv 378-9

³⁸⁰ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iii 116-7

Economists and the Plekhanovites becoming reconciled. This might seem like the most surprising statement of all, as the discussions in August show that Lenin ultimately accepted Plekhanov's diagnosis of Economism as a rival political phenomenon, alien to revolutionary Marxism. In fact, this unexpected optimism is to be explained by certain changes in circumstance, which Lenin keenly exploited.

In the first few months of the *Iskra*'s existence, the editorial board appears to have derived hope that a section of the Economists would break with their past views and come over to the position of revolutionary Marxism, or at least something close to it. This hope came from two separate sources. Firstly, there was a chance that events inside Russia would radicalise a further part of the Union Abroad. *Iskra* first appeared at a time when Russian students, after a long period of indifference to politics had begun to demonstrate and organise resistance to a heavily policed university system.³⁸¹ The protest movement was sparked by a military suppression of a peaceful student meeting at the University of Kiev in December 1899 and undoubtedly inspired a student previously expelled for political activities to assassinate the Russian Minister for Public Enlightenment in February 1900.³⁸² The fact that in the New Year, workers started to join the demonstrations and that they often involved clearly anti-autocratic slogans could have been taken for a very practical refutation to those fascinated by 'stagist' tactics and reformist strategies.³⁸³ Secondly, there was a group of three individuals, one still a member of the Union Abroad, the other two close to *Iskra-Zaria* who openly advocated a reunification policy in the emigration. This fraction was based in Paris had met with representatives of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and the editorial trio during the autumn of 1900. As a result it had apparently declared itself in full solidarity with *Osvobozhdenie Truda*'s views on all questions apart from that of organisational separation with the Union Abroad.³⁸⁴ It was perhaps more influential than its small size suggested, owing the presence of DB Riazanov in its ranks, an able

³⁸¹ *Listok Rabochego Dela* 5 (Jan 1901), 7-12; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, iv 414-19

³⁸² *Listok Rabochego Dela* 5 (Jan. 1901), 20, 30-1

³⁸³ *Listok Rabochego Dela* 6 (Apr. 1901), 2-3

³⁸⁴ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iii 58-9 See Ya G Rokitsanskii, 'Stolknovenie Riazanova s Leninym: teoreticheskie i organizatsionnye podxody', *Vestnik RAN* 77 (2007: 8) 798-810 for a more detailed account of Riazanov's thinking during this period, albeit one that is quite eccentric in its treatment of Lenin.

writer who later went on to become the head of the Marx-Engels Institute, and two other unusually energetic individuals.³⁸⁵ Against the background of disturbances in Russia, *Iskra* was apparently making clear its support for this pre-existing 'reconciliation project', partially to put an end to *Osvobozhdenie Truda*'s isolation, but also because in the given political circumstances any movement towards a united group would most likely split the Economists, a section of which would now be doubting *Rabochee Delo*'s previous political position. One consequence of this could have been that the part of the Union that went into any fused group would not be as large as the combined forces of *Iskra* and *Sotsial-Democrat*. This would give the revolutionary Marxists a dominant position in an émigré organisation with a better claim than its Economist rival of being recognised as the official representative of the RSDLP abroad.

With the publication of its sixth agitational *Listok* in April 1901, there was indeed a break with the 'stagist' gradualism *Rabochee Delo* had previously supported. Moreover, the change did reflect the events taking place in Russia. Declaring that a 'new era'³⁸⁶ had begun, its editors announced that the workers had acquired 'political and revolutionary' ideas in a quite unexpected and in no sense gradual manner.³⁸⁷ Consequently, the emphasis on economic agitation as a means to politicising workers was to be dropped, and the call was given to organise political demonstrations instead. In the words of the article:

Деятельность рассчитанная на серую, мирную обстановку, на период всеобщего упадка революционного духа, на медленный эволюционный рост сознательности рабочей массы, на систематическое воспитание её, так сказать, путем перехода от простого к сложному, от близкого к более далекому, - такая деятельность была бы роковой ошибкой в момент быстрого прилива революционных сил, когда каждый день начавшейся активной борьбы с самодержавием революционизирует массу гораздо быстрее, чем целые годы мирной пропаганды и агитации.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ Ibid., iii 58-9

³⁸⁶ *Listok Rabochego Dela* 6 (April 1901), 1

³⁸⁷ «Рабочие Петербурга, Москвы, Харькова и Киева обнаружили политический смысл и революционное чутье, каких не ожидал от них не один социалдемократ и ни один революционер вообще.» [Ibid., 2]

³⁸⁸ 'Activity reckoning on a grey, peaceful situation, on a period of the general depression of the

This might have seemed promising from the perspective of *Iskra*, were it not for the fact that this rather blustering article also defended policy of assassinations,³⁸⁹ and advocated converting May Day from a working class event into a pro-democracy demonstration involving all anti-autocratic forces.³⁹⁰ Because of these problems, *Iskra* felt obliged to issue a criticism of it, the result being Lenin's well-known article *Where To Begin*. Though first appearances might seem to the contrary, the decision to print this reply did not actually represent a return to Plekhanov's more combative attitude towards Economism. *Iskra*'s strategy at this stage remained one of promoting organisational unity, in order to overturn a situation which appeared to leave a section of the Plekhanovites outside the RSDLP. However, this was not accompanied by the insistence that different viewpoints should not be aired as a price for achieving this unity, which was in any case but a means to strengthening the revolutionary Marxist's position. Precisely because the *rapprochement* policy was but a means to an end, if there was a chance that a polemical article could change the loyalties of some former opponents and thus the balance of forces between Economist and revolutionary, then it too was justified. This said, Lenin miscalculated. His polemic did not so much win over disaffected Economists, so much as alienate the Paris conciliating group, who did indeed choose to regard it as a break with *Iskra*'s prior policy of neutrality in the émigré split.³⁹¹ The main consequence of *Where To Begin* was the temporary

revolutionary spirit, on the slow evolutionary growth of the consciousness of the working mass, on the systematic raising of it, so to say from the simple to the complex, from the near to the further, such activity would be *a fatal mistake* in this, the moment of a rapid flow of revolutionary force, when every day, starting with an active struggle with the autocracy, revolutionises the masses much more quickly than a year of peaceful propaganda or agitation.' [Ibid., 4]

³⁸⁹ «Выстрелы Карповича и Логовского и то горячее сочувствие, которые они встретили в рядах молодежи и всех революционных элементов вообще, ясно показывают, что *белый террор* царского правительства снова, с необратимой силой закона природы, создает почву для *красного террора* революционеров. Наши партийные организации не могут и не должны игнорировать этого факта, обходить его молчанием. Они должны *сообща* решить, какое положение им следует занять, по отношению к террору. » [Ibid., 5]

³⁹⁰ «... наши партийные организации должны на этот раз *призывать к участию в майской манифестации не только пролетариат, но и все революционные, анти-правительственные силы...*» [Ibid., 6]

³⁹¹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iii 162-3

defection of the entire conciliation group to the side of the Union Abroad, in an attempt to punish *Iskra* with a boycott. After a short period, the Parisians re-emerged as an independent group, but it now had the support of the Union Abroad for its reunification project as well as that of *Iskra* as a result of its gesture of protest.³⁹²

Ironically, it was this petty manoeuvre, and not the substantial issues such as May Day and terrorism which first caused Lenin to question his policy of reconciliation with the Economists. In a letter to Axelrod in April 1901 sent during the 'boycott', Lenin suggested the idea of organising an entirely separate revolutionary Marxist émigré organisation excluding both the Union Abroad and the Riazanov group.³⁹³ This seemed to represent a partial admission that his strategy was not working, that the split was permanent and that the RSDLP would perhaps remain in Economist hands. However, at this stage he was still prepared to keep his options open. This new 'League-type organisation', to use Lenin's words would not establish relations with *Iskra*, which Lenin was by this stage characterising as a 'Russian' rather than an émigré operation.³⁹⁴ Instead it would combine *Zaria*, which would pass to the control of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, and 'Sotsial-Demokrat'. As such, even after the debacle over *Where To Begin*, Lenin still sought to keep *Iskra* as aloof as possible from the émigré disputes, and thus to give at least one half of the revolutionary Marxists maximum authority and independence in relation to it.³⁹⁵ Through such an arrangement, Riazanov's quibbles about the status of *Iskra* could be appeased, and any further criticism *Rabochee Delo* could be published in *Zaria* without compromising

³⁹² Ibid., iii 171

³⁹³ Ibid., iii 163

³⁹⁴ Ibid., iii 163 «У меня явилась мысль нельзя ли попытать следующий план организации: Организации «Социал-Демократ», редакции «Зари» и группы такие-то берлинцы, например, - парижане может быть и т.п. или лица такие-то соединяются в одну, скажем, Лигу. Литературное заведывание троякое: Социал-Демократ Группа Освобождение Труда распоряжается своей типографией, «Заря» - своей, а выборная Литературная Комиссия является ближайшим сотрудником, участвует в периодических общередакционных съездах и печатает (за подписью Литературной Комиссии брошюры и т.п.) ... Верховное решение литературных вопросов в Лиге принадлежит конференции из трех членов: от Группа Освобождение Труда, от Зари и от Литературной Комиссии. Администрация общая, выборная. Такова суть моего проекта (Искра, как русское издание конечно, в Лигу формально не входит).» (Emphasis in original)

³⁹⁵ See previous note

Iskra's plans. This rearrangement might seem ridiculous given the fact that both *Iskra* and *Zaria* were edited by exactly the same six people, but there is little doubt that other émigrés took the distinction seriously. The remarkable thing about the Riazanov incident was that, despite criticising *Iskra* for replying to *Rabochee Delo*, he had himself written a much lengthier criticism of the *Rabochee Delo* programme in the March issue of *Zaria*.³⁹⁶ The letter to Axelrod therefore reveals a flexible side to Lenin's tactical thinking, an impression reinforced when we consider Lenin's response to the unexpected news that they had been 'forgiven' by the Parisian conciliators, and that a new unity conference, involving the Union Abroad, 'Sotsial-Demokrat', *Iskra* and the Parisians themselves was being planned. On hearing this change of circumstances, Lenin once again switched tactics, urging his colleagues to support this initiative and dropping, for the moment at least, the question of a separate revolutionary Marxist émigré organisation. To this meeting *Iskra* agreed readily and, dragging its feet and protesting somewhat, 'Sotsial-Demokrat' also sent representation.³⁹⁷

In preparation for this event, Lenin put forward a completely different plan for reorganising the émigré social-democracy. Now, he directly proposed the re-establishment of an all-inclusive 'Foreign Committee of the RSDLP' which, perhaps surprisingly, given his later views on the subject, was to be constructed on federal lines.³⁹⁸ According to this new plan, *Zaria* would replace *Rabochee Delo* as the Foreign Committee's 'thick' theoretical journal, whilst *Rabochee Delo* and its 'supplement' would be converted into 'a popular collection or journal for workers'.³⁹⁹ The Parisian group would produce a series of pamphlets, whilst *Iskra* would also join the arrangement, presumably on the grounds that the émigré split had been successfully resolved. Whilst the point about *Rabochee Delo* might look like another aggressive move against the Economists, this modification had been in circulation

³⁹⁶ *Zaria* 1 (Apr. 1901) 118-36

³⁹⁷ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iii 173, 180, 185

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, iii 173

³⁹⁹ «...мы готовы допустить совместительство с научным органом (Зарей) и политической газетой (Искрой) популярного сборника или журнала для рабочих (Рабочего Дела) ... Может быть и в самом деле объединение или федерация на такой основе состоится - это было бы громадным шагом вперед.» [*Ibid.*, iii 172-3]

since the attempt at a second RSDLP Congress the previous year, and as such was probably supported by *Rabochee Delo* itself.⁴⁰⁰ The proposed organisation's 'federal' character prevented the interference of one group with the internal affairs of the other, beyond the initial agreement over the distribution of literary functions. This might surprise those who are used to the image of Lenin as an implacable centraliser, but it seems that a stricter discipline would have been impossible, given the two opposing tendencies that were supposed to co-exist in this committee. Ostensibly to reinforce unity of purpose, all elements of the federation would be requested to subscribe to a programmatic statement written by Plekhanov, stating its opposition to revisionist ideological currents and its unalloyed support for scientific socialism, its support for the struggle to overthrow the autocracy and for a democratic republic, and so on.⁴⁰¹ Whilst this last point could be interpreted as an attempt at direct confrontation with the Economists, because of the recent shift in *Rabochee Delo*'s policy, it seems likely that Lenin believed they would accept this revolutionary statement of principles, not least as a result of pressure from the Parisian group. This calculation was proved correct, and all émigré groups subscribed to Plekhanov's statement at a meeting in June.⁴⁰²

This said, there was an element of a trap in Lenin's tactics at this point. As we have just noted, there was undoubtedly a fair amount of scepticism towards Lenin's plan from members of both *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and 'Sotsial-Demokrat', in the weeks preceding the June meeting. Even the normally conciliatory Axelrod appeared opposed to further negotiations with members of the Union Abroad.⁴⁰³ Equally, everything we have discussed in this and the previous chapter shows the leading individuals in *Rabochee Delo* and the Union Abroad to be inconsistent and prone to insincerity. At first glance, it can therefore seem that he was a little naive to expect his plans to succeed, or to believe that those who signed the June agreement would keep

⁴⁰⁰ «... съезд предлагает С[ююз] р[усских] с.д. придать Р[абочему] Д[елу] характер популярно-научного сборника, не исключая из него в то же время обзора и критики русской деятельности. » [AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-demokraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 321 [article 4c]]

⁴⁰¹ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh, i resheniakh s"ezdov, konferentsy i plenumov ts k, tom pervyi: 1898-1917* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskogo literatury, 1970), 35-7

⁴⁰² VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, v 225-6

⁴⁰³ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iii 185

their word, especially when we learn that *Rabochee Delo* did subsequently break terms. However, we do not believe this perception to be a correct one. Lenin was probably aware of the fragile nature of any pact just as much as the older émigrés, but he had the advantage over them of having a plan to make *Rabochee Delo* look much more isolated than it really was, should it go back on its word. This was as follows. The June meeting was attended by *Iskra*, 'Sotsial-Democrat', the Union Abroad and the Parisian conciliators. Of these, the Union Abroad was by far the most solid organisation, probably still making up a majority of the émigré social-democracy. However, the other three groups were more or less united in their Plekhanovite political outlook, a circumstance which seems to have pressured the ideologically uncertain Union Abroad into putting its name to Plekhanov's programmatic document, if only for the sake of maintaining unity. However, in the months that followed the conference this pretence proved impossible to keep up, especially in the wake of *Where To Begin*, to which *Rabochee Delo* would probably want to respond. Accordingly, two articles appeared in the tenth issue of *Rabochee Delo* which clearly contradicted the June programme.⁴⁰⁴ This gave the remaining three organisations the opportunity to accuse the Union Abroad of splitting tactics, which was significant in so far as it represented a complete reversal in terms of the balance of forces on either side of the original break between the Plekhanovites and the Economists. For the first time since April 1900 it gave the former, not the latter the greater claim to the RSDLP title, by a majority of three organisations to one. The June unity conference was decisive in this respect as it persuaded the Union Abroad to *voluntarily* relinquish its pretensions to being an official RSDLP organisation in favour of a new official RSDLP committee recognised by all tendencies. Lenin's persuading the Union to agree to this was a therefore in itself major organisational *coup* for the Plekhanovites. Better still, when new polemical articles appeared in the tenth issue of *Rabochee Delo*, the spirit of which clearly contradicted the revolutionary programme, it seems like it was the Economist journal and not the revolutionary Marxists who were walking away from a united émigré social-democratic organisation.

Consequently, what at first sight appeared to be a naivety that only promised a

⁴⁰⁴ *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sept 1901) 1-63. For a more detailed account of these articles, albeit it one rather reticent concerning their organisational context: LT Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered*, 309-321

hard lesson for an individual inexperienced in the cynical politics of émigré life was in fact a very well-executed political manoeuvre. This becomes clear when we study documents connected to the second unity meeting, which took place in Zurich in October 1901, following the offending articles in *Rabochee Delo*. Lenin's opening speech at this meeting contains the following observations:

As a representative of *Iskra* I consider it necessary to touch on the history of our attitude to the other organisations. *Iskra* has been completely independent from its very inception, recognising only ideological connections with Russian Social-Democracy and functioning on instructions from many comrades in Russia. In its first issue *Iskra* declared that it would not deal with the organisational differences that had arisen in the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and attached the greatest importance to its position on matters of principle.

Some members of the Union Abroad proposed that we hold a conference to come to an agreement with the organisations abroad. We understood the proposal to mean that a group in the Union was in agreement with our principles, which made it possible that the Union would also accept them. The revolutionary organisation 'Sotsial-Demokrat', voiced agreement, notwithstanding considerable organisational differences, as well as differences on principle. The Union, unfortunately, refused to negotiate. When a new group of initiators appeared, the Union consented to the negotiations. Since the Union had no distinct physiognomy and since a new trend towards revolutionary Marxism had manifested itself within it, it was to be hoped that an agreement on principle would be possible. *Iskra* and 'Sotsial-Demokrat' again consented, and the Geneva Conference was held. At the beginning of our session Comrade Kruglov read the conference resolution without any comments. No one from the Union took the floor in opposition.

We affirm that in its tenth issue, *Rabochee Delo* made a decisive break with the traditions of revolutionary Marxism and opposed the agreement on principles elaborated at the Geneva Conference, with whose tendencies the Union is apparently in agreement.⁴⁰⁵

This provides a very concise summary of Lenin's thinking over the previous ten months. He states at the beginning that *Iskra* remains neutral in relation to the émigré dispute, possibly exaggerating a little when claiming to be receiving instructions from Russia, simply to underline the point that he did not want the paper to be considered part of the émigré scene, even though it was being published in Munich. This is partially a white lie, a convenient shorthand method of expressing Lenin's support for Plekhanov's programmatic writings whilst rejecting the

⁴⁰⁵ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, v 225-6

organisational tactics of Plekhanov himself, characterised as they were by the clumsy decision to walk out of the Union Abroad. Lenin then speaks of 'some members of the Union Abroad' - these are the Parisian group: Riazanov, Steklov and Gurevich. Lenin is in fact wrong when he describes them as members of the Union as, by the time they took on their conciliating role, two of them had already resigned, and only one, Gurevich, remained in the Union.⁴⁰⁶ This in fact explains why the Union Abroad 'refused to negotiate' at first, and was only assured of the Parisian's *bona fides* following their temporary boycott of *Iskra*. The Economists' change of policy is expressed in Lenin's speech as the appearance of a 'new group' of initiators more to the liking of the Union Abroad, a formulation which accurately reflects the change in the political identity of the group whilst disguising the fact that its personal composition remained the same, possibly for security reasons. As for Lenin's belief that a broader section of the Union Abroad could be turning towards Plekhanovism, apart from the Parisians, we can essentially take this at face value. There is plenty of evidence for the political instability of Union's views in 1901, and given the events in Russia, a radicalisation of their stance was always likely.

Lenin then speaks of the June conference, and its formal acceptance of the Plekhanovite programme. He alleges a violation of the agreement by *Rabochee Delo*, an argument that is convincing. The resolution to the June meeting declared support for scientific socialism and a revolutionary version of social democracy. It explicitly rejected 'attempts to introduce opportunism into the class struggle of the proletariat - an attempt expressed in so-called economism, Bernsteinism, Millerandism etc'.⁴⁰⁷ The immediate political task of the working class was defined as the overthrow of the autocracy, which is presented 'as a preliminary condition of its full social liberation'.⁴⁰⁸ Under Russian conditions, the leadership of the anti-autocratic struggle

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., v 528-9: Here Lenin appears to correct his mistake, whilst rather disguising the fact that the personal composition of the 'initiators' group' never changed.

⁴⁰⁷ « Признавая основные принципы научного социализма и действуя солидарно с международной социал-демократией, мы отвергаем всякие попытки внесения оппортунизма в классовую борьбу пролетариата, - попытки, выразившиеся в так называемом экономизме, бернштейнианстве, мильеранизме и т.п. » [*KPSS v resoliutsiakh*, 36]

⁴⁰⁸ «Заявляя свою солидарность с манифестом (1898 г.) РСДРП и с основными традициями русской социал-демократии, мы признаем ближайшей задачей рабочего класса в России

fell to the proletariat.⁴⁰⁹ Agitational policy must make use of the concrete grievances of the masses to present the positive alternative of a democratic republic and a socialist system, propaganda must teach scientific socialism, and so on.⁴¹⁰ As for the two problematic articles, Krichevskii's restated the original *Rabochee Delo* notion that 'scientific socialism' was useless unless supplemented by 'the concrete class relations' obtaining in Russia and the demands of the working class;⁴¹¹ his defence of Bernstein place in the social democratic movement;⁴¹² and in addition raised the prospect of unity with populist elements.⁴¹³ The author also supported agitation in support of assassinations and even, where possible, demonstrations in favour of them.⁴¹⁴ Equally, in the second article, Martynov directly challenged the Plekhanovite view on the overthrow of the autocracy. Instead he advanced a rather confused reformist strategy, suggesting that the RSDLP 'can and must put forward to the government concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures against economic exploitation, against unemployment, against hunger etc'.⁴¹⁵ In his view 'in

низвержение самодержавия как необходимое предварительное условие его полного социального освобождения.» [Ibid., 36]

⁴⁰⁹ «Условия исторического развития России выдвигают перед РСДРП, стоящей на почве классового движения пролетариата, задачу вести борьбу с абсолютизмом во главе всех угнетенных слоев нации.» [Ibid., 36]

⁴¹⁰ «В круг деятельности социал-демократии входит: а) руководство всеми проявлениями борьбы пролетариата против всех форм политического, экономического и социального угнетения в целях превращения недовольства и возмущения рабочего класса в сознательную борьбу за демократическую республику и социалистический строй.» [Ibid., 36]

⁴¹¹ *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sep. 1901), 6

⁴¹² «В современном же социалистическом движении нет столкновения классовых интересов, оно все целиком во *всех* своих разновидностях, включая и самых отъявленных бернштейнианцев, стоит на почве классовых интересов пролетариата, его классовой борьбы за политическое и экономическое освобождение.» [Ibid., 33]

⁴¹³ «Объединение социалдемократов, понимаемое в *этом* смысле является к тому же первым этапом к *объединению всех русских революционеров-социалистов ...*» [Ibid., 36]

⁴¹⁴ «Охотно признаемся что вслед за приглашением наших партийных организаций занять единодушную позицию по отношению к террору, мы думали было высказать наше мнение и насчет того, какова должна быть эта позиция - а именно пригласить наши организации, в случае террористических фактов, издавать сочувственные прокламации и устраивать сочувственные демонстрации.» [Ibid., 22-24]

⁴¹⁵ «Наша партия могла бы и должна была бы ставит правительству конкретные требования

our political conditions these demands would have a revolutionary significance'.⁴¹⁶ It is of course quite a strange 'revolution' that would consist in the Tsar and his 'administration' submitting to the partial demands of a working class party, acting as its champion whilst remaining on his throne. Not a few historians have since argued that precisely such measures were needed to *prevent* revolution and have more than once accused the Russian autocracy of inflexibility in these matters, even blaming this factor for the revolution that ultimately swept it away.⁴¹⁷ With such confused notions being mooted, it was clear that the June meeting had become meaningless.

The fruits of this trouncing of *Rabochee Delo*'s position were expressed in Lenin's statement on the conference which appeared in the next issue of *Iskra*.⁴¹⁸ This statement announced the fusion of *Iskra* with 'Sotsial-Demokrat' and, through the latter, *Osvobozhdeniye Truda*, to create the 'League of Revolutionary Russian Social-Democrats Abroad'. The period of *Iskra*'s 'organisational neutrality' and the practice of taking an intermediate position between Plekhanov and the Economists had thus come to an end. It had been achieved in the following manner, according to Lenin:

Early in summer, a conference of representatives of the three organisations drafted an agreement. The basis of the agreement was provided by a number of resolutions on matters of principle, according to which the Union Abroad would put an end to all flirting with Economism and Bernsteinism, and recognise the principles of revolutionary Social-Democracy.⁴¹⁹

Lenin observes of the October meeting:

In fact, at the conference of the three organisations, the Union Abroad proposed "amendments" to the above-mentioned resolutions, which clearly showed that it was reverting to its previous deviations. The other organisations felt obliged to leave the conference, and in fact did so.⁴²⁰

законодательных и административных мероприятий против экономической эксплуатации, против безработицы, против голода и т. д.» [Ibid., 43]

⁴¹⁶ «И несомненно, что при наших политических условиях такая тактика имела бы революционное значение.» [Ibid., 43]

⁴¹⁷ O Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (London: Pimlico, 1996) 809-1

⁴¹⁸ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, v 241-2

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., v 241

⁴²⁰ Ibid., v 242

This is an intriguing way of presenting matters. The second conference is presented as a meeting of 'three' organisations. This statement does not seem quite accurate: in fact four definite groupings attended - the Union Abroad, *Iskra*, 'Sotsial-Demokrat' and the Parisians. One might also include a fifth, *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, though it seems this group was considered a component part of 'Sotsial-Demokrat'. It is probable that Lenin here considers the Parisians to be part of the Union Abroad, thus producing a meeting of two revolutionary groups - *Iskra* and 'Sotsial-Demokrat' - and one Economist group - the Union Abroad. The function of the meeting was to recreate a united official foreign committee of the RSDLP. The apparent *majority* walk out of the meeting in protest at the Union's breach of agreement. However, in writing this, Lenin is being a little too kind to his opponents. In fact, it is possible to say that the Union Abroad's amendments to and polemics against the June agreement alienated *four* separate organisations. As such, they could be effectively portrayed as the 'wreckers' and a minority of *one* against *four*, and we are left with conclusion that Lenin is simply being magnanimous towards an utterly out-manoeuvred opponent. The question which might then be posed is why, if they were certain of such a majority, the revolutionary Marxists actually walked out of the meeting, and did not simply consolidate their majority in an official, united émigré committee of the RSDLP. The short answer to this appears to be that they had simply had enough of the inconsistency and intrigues of both the Union Abroad and the Parisians who, for all their apparent sympathy with Plekhanovite views, are repeatedly referred to as Union Abroad members, and who are not mentioned as a component part of the new revolutionary 'League'. Regardless of this factor, Lenin's adroit manoeuvring turns the tables on the Economists, utterly undermining their organisation's claim to be the official émigré body of the RSDLP. They were a minority and they had violated the founding statute of this body, agreed by all in June. The period of partial conflict between *Osvobozhdeniye Truda* and the RSDLP is thus brought to a close. The émigré split is not liquidated, but Economism's claim to authority within the RSDLP receives a blow, and the claim of revolutionary Marxism to an official status within the RSDLP is, if not exactly sealed by this incident, massively strengthened.

One conclusion which could be derived from this chapter is that Lenin had the quite unusual capacity to develop concrete policies which advanced the cause of general political ideas. For Plekhanov, it was enough to advocate a revolutionary Marxist understanding of the world, he did not properly understand the mechanics of political power that could put him in a position of genuine influence. By contrast, Lenin understood that the influence of an idea depends to a huge degree on the status on the person articulating it, and accordingly gave battle for the right to be an authentic spokesman of the RSDLP. The methods he used in this struggle never descended to the type of deceit demonstrable in the Economist leaders, but instead involved negotiations, deal-making and attempts to define organisational relations that would put his opponents at a disadvantage, usually with the explicit consent of these same opponents. Speaking bluntly, one could say he made fools of them. Analysing the way in which he did this can be very interesting, as it represents a fine exhibition of political skills and general intelligence. On the other hand it can seem that there is nothing in it which indicates a special Leninist *modus operandi*. In other words, given these kind of tricks are employed by *all* successful politicians, one could argue that they are not of interest to a political theorist aiming to learn something about the way revolutionary Marxists organise their political parties. Because of this feature in Lenin's behaviour, certain writers have rather unfortunately concluded that Lenin is nothing more than a Marxist Machiavelli or, worse, a Machiavellian who happened through circumstance to be a Marxist. He is sometimes seen as an individual well-rehearsed in all the dark arts necessary to wield power, a power which he chose to use, essentially as a result of personal inclination, in the service of revolutionary socialism.

This seems to be a one-sided view. As well as revealing some remarkably sharp tactical thinking, Lenin also seems to have been committed to the strategy of seeking to ensure that the revolutionary Marxist current remained part of the RSDLP, and that it did not form a separate group outside it. The reason he pursues this course is not hard to determine. Since the 1880s, the Plekhanovites had formally supported the idea of creating a workers' socialist party prior to the appearance of a democratic

system in Russia. As we shall see in the next chapter, regardless of its problems, Lenin always identified the RSDLP with this Plekhanovite notion, refusing to allow even his own teacher in theoretical matters to turn against the party when a non-revolutionary Marxist current appeared to have taken over within it. Thus, behind Lenin's manoeuvres there is a stable political position. Throughout the entire period we are studying Lenin appears to have aimed for the creation of a real, functioning RSDLP that was not only possessed an official leadership and programme, but also a solid organisational apparatus, a more or less unified political will and, crucially, a revolutionary Marxist current within it that could exercise a real influence on all these features. Such a regeneration of the RSDLP could not be achieved by means of the tricks discussed in the present chapter. It required a clear vision of what the revived party should look like, and some definite principles of organisation. To be in a position to put these principles into practice it was, apparently, necessary for Lenin to play a hard political game at certain times. However, once he was in a position of greater authority, it seems that his behaviour changes somewhat, owing to the fact that the position of the revolutionary Marxists in the RSDLP is finally secure. Not only that, from this point on Lenin reveals himself to be a fairly democratic and consensual party leader who consolidates the position of the revolutionary Marxists not so much by manoeuvres, but by creating a constitutional basis within the RSDLP for competition between the revolutionary Marxist and Economist tendencies, and then winning this contest for the former.

B: The Struggle Between Democratic Centralism and Federalism

Chapter Four: November 1901-February 1903: Party Democracy

The next two chapters are dedicated to events connected with the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which took place in July and August 1903. This event represented the high point of a campaign on the part of Lenin to reorganise the RSDLP, which started in the immediate aftermath of the second émigré split in October 1901. It was also the point at which this campaign met with a crucial defeat, which in the end actually delayed the reunification of the RSDLP on Leninist principles for nine years, until the Sixth All-Russia RSDLP Conference in 1912. From the point of view of Marxist political theory, the way in which Lenin guided the organising drive towards this Second Congress is extremely interesting, in terms of its capacity to expose myths concerning the way Lenin organised and led the workers' party. In particular, we are concerned with the view that these methods were dictatorial, hyper-centralist and that they involved forcing uniform opinions on an unwilling membership. In the light of the evidence we are about to discuss, we contend that such arguments have gained an undeserved credibility because of ignorance concerning the pre-history of the Second Congress, or possibly even the conscious turning of a blind eye to this process on the part of scholars. Whatever the case, in no previous history has the organising process leading up to this Congress been given sufficient attention.

In particular, historians to date have not given enough thought to the fact that the RSDLP was a *pre-existing organisation*, founded prior to all the events we have been discussing in this thesis, even if its apparatus was non-existent. Behind this lapse is the false notion that a Marxist workers' party is nothing but an apparatus of full-time officials and material resources, a view which ignores both its ideological and its social aspect. Against this common view, we contend that a party which lacks a well-developed apparatus can be taken seriously if it is united by clear ideas about how society and politics should be, and if it has real roots in a definite section of the population. Accordingly, we challenge the notion that the 1903 RSDLP Congress was not in fact a 'second' congress as a flawed one, an argument which, incidentally, rehearses the Bund's extremely inconsistent and self-justifying opinion of the event.⁴²¹

⁴²¹ BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 232; ST Possony, *Lenin: The Compulsive*

It ignores the fact that, between 1898 and 1903, the RSDLP became a popular label of political self-identification among Russian revolutionaries, trade unionists and political dissidents: during this period it seems likely that thousands of individuals during this period considered themselves to be members or supporters of this party. This popularity can be seen from the fact that publications as diverse as the Economist *Rabochee Delo*, *Iskra*, *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, the Parisian group's *Borba* all acknowledged their adherence to the party, not infrequently on the masthead of their newspaper or journal, as did the Bund itself right up until the beginning of 1903.⁴²² Because previous researchers have not acknowledge this phenomenon, they have also proved strangers to the fact that the political preferences the various Russian social-democratic organisations who considered themselves part of the RSDLP changed over time as a result of new ones being created, old ones being smashed by the police, and others changing their political views. For this reason, the widespread support for the general idea of a workers' social-democratic party did not actually reflect a consistent set of programmatic and organisational ideas. On the contrary, the question of the RSDLP's political character gave cause for a struggle between different political tendencies even before *Iskra* had been conceived, a fact which makes the all too common criticism of their factional domination at the Second Congress seem a little misplaced. All previous RSDLP meetings, not to mention those which followed, also had definite political colourations, which reflected the dominance of one or another particular faction at them.⁴²³

In 1898 the RSDLP was founded on the initiative of the revolutionary Kiev newspaper *Rabochaia Gazeta*, which looked towards *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, though it

Revolutionary, 93; RD Warth, *Lenin*, 50; M Liebman *Leninism under Lenin*, trans. B Pearce, (London: Merlin Press, 1975) 27; R Pipes *The Russian Revolution 1899-1919* (London: Collins Harvell, 1997) 360

⁴²² *Rabochee Delo* 1 (April 1899) 5; *Iskra* 1-44 1; *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sep 1901) 125; OA Ermanskii, *Otchet s'ezda iuzhnikh komitetov i organizatsii*, (Geneva, 1902); RSDLP, *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress* 479-82; R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 268

⁴²³ BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 231-2; JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 110; ST Possony, *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*, 93; R Service, *Lenin, A Political Life*, i 101; P Pomper, *The Intelligentsia and Power*, 72-3

apparently also had some political differences with it.⁴²⁴ Apart from this organization, but probably in close sympathy with them, the delegate from St Petersburg was S.I. Radchenko, a close ally of Lenin and Krupskaya, clearly a Plekhanovite.⁴²⁵ Their combined influence produced a bold, revolutionary *Manifesto* which not only identified the main immediate task of the working-class movement as the achievement of a democratic constitution, but also stated that the working class would play the leading role in Russia's democratic revolution.⁴²⁶ Not only that, the party constitution agreed at this meeting was quite centralised, stating that the seven organisations present had fused into one structure, and accepted a commonly elected leadership, whose decisions they were expected to obey, and whose activities they were prepared to fund.⁴²⁷ Both these features indicate how the First Congress of the RSDLP expressed the views of the militant left-wing of the Russian social-democratic movement. However, as is well-known, most of the participants in this congress were arrested: serious damage was done to the Kiev movement, and this destroyed *Rabochaia Gazeta*.⁴²⁸ Further, the one delegate who escaped, Radchenko, was by this stage representing a rump of just four Plekhanovites in St Petersburg, the rest of the local movement having gone over to Economism following the police raid against the Lenin tendency.⁴²⁹ As such, the First Congress can be seen as representing the last stand of a fatally weakened left wing of Russian social-democracy. Somewhat ironically, the notion of the RSDLP grew in popularity in the months that followed, but its banner was taken up by people with rather different views in this next period.

The documents of the Lalaiaants-Kopel'zon attempt at a second RSDLP congress in the spring of 1900 clearly reflected this change in political direction.⁴³⁰ The demand of the First Congress that the Second discuss and approve a party programme, clearly stating the common views and goals of the party, was

⁴²⁴ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 298-9

⁴²⁵ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 23

⁴²⁶ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 223-5

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 225-6

⁴²⁸ Akimov claims five hundred social-democrats were arrested after the First Congress, one hundred and seventy six of them in Kiev [VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 302]

⁴²⁹ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 21, 23; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 265-77

⁴³⁰ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 316-22

significantly modified on this occasion. There is evidence that the founders of the RSDLP wanted *Osvobozhdenie Truda* to contribute to this party programme, given its well-developed theoretical views.⁴³¹ However, in 1900 this plan was replaced with the more modest goal of preparing a 'programme-minimum', the idea being to focus on supposedly 'achievable' goals, whilst bypassing any discussion of theoretical views or the general aims of the party, a departure which challenged its previously revolutionary political content.⁴³² In the same fashion, despite the production of a fairly complete party constitution in 1898, the group around Kopel'zon and Lalaiaants took the trouble to work out a new one, expressing federalistic notions that contrasted with the centralism of the previous statutes.⁴³³ For these two reasons it seemed that the RSDLP was being converted from a clearly revolutionary and Marxist organisation, albeit one in which differing conceptions of Marxism could co-exist, into a federalist labour party which remained silent on the question of revolution, and which scarcely seemed to propogate any definite views at all. This new approach seemed to aim at incorporating within its fairly loose structure all the most significant Russian social-democratic organisations, and to accomodate all their diverse opinions in one party structure by means of the politics of the lowest common denominator. Consequently, during the period we are studying there appear to have been two clear and distinct views as to what the RSDLP actually was, both of which remained in the realm of theory, neither side having been able to properly realise their plans. The first, represented by *Iskra* seemed to take as its general starting point the documents of the First Congress. The second was the federalist-Economist view, which found expression in the pre-congress documents of the Lalaiaants-Kopel'zon 'congress attempt'. The latter initially seemed to have the political advantage in that it was supported by the Union Abroad, the Bund and for a time the 'southern' - in other words, the Ukrainian - social-democratic organisations. *Iskra*'s main weapon was only the argument that it, rather than the Lalaiaants-Kopel'zon alliance more truly represented the views of the only ever official RSDLP meeting, along with an

⁴³¹ R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 236-41

⁴³² AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 319 [article 1] As we saw earlier, this lack was challenged by the 'editorial board of *Rabochaia Gazeta*': Lenin, Martov and Potresov.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, i 319-21 [article 3]

effective all-Russian - as opposed to regional - network for broadcasting its views.

In the next two chapters, we will be examining the struggle between these two tendencies over the character of the RSDLP, focusing on the period from the final split in the emigration, at the end of 1901, up to the end of the Second Congress itself. In our view, this can be characterised as a struggle between a fairly *elitist* type of federalism and reformism, on the one hand, and revolutionary *democratic* centralism on the other. We will examine this conflict as follows. In the present chapter we will focus on what can be regarded as the first phase of this conflict, the preparations for the Second Congress of the RSDLP, the second being the factional struggle at the Congress itself. These preparations for congress set out in particularly bold relief Lenin's democratic and constitutionally-minded organisational principles. They show how he fought to create a multi-tendency workers party, based in class struggle socialism and capable of incorporating reformist and revolutionary currents within it, whilst at the same time striving to secure a clearly revolutionary programme and leadership for such a party. That is to say, during this period Lenin and *Iskra* strives to act both as lawgiver and government to the RSDLP, in the sense that their methods are clearly shown to revolve around the creation of a generally-recognised constitutional order inside the party. In the name of this type of order, he fights against arbitrary decision making by the most influential individuals; stands for the creation of a party leadership which has the express support of the greater part of those Russian organisations that consider themselves part of the party; and gives a real form to the principle that the party should be governed by rules consciously approved by these same organisations. On this party-constitutional basis, he directs the construction of a sovereign RSDLP congress with a robust claim to being representative of the real balance of factional forces in the organisation, despite its being dominated by the *Iskra* faction. This domination, we contend, is the product of a fair fight for power and influence within the RSDLP carried on largely in accordance with the rules and assumptions laid down by Lenin, but approved by the party as a whole.

Controversially perhaps, whilst in the process of designing the new party order itself, Lenin simultaneously supported the aggressive prosecution of this factional

struggle, which may cause questions to be posed about separation of powers by constitutional-democratic purists. However, given the complete collapse of RSDLP institutions, this was probably the only avenue open for an individual who wanted the party to be both revolutionary Marxist in leadership and democratic-constitutional in form. An individual who was 'above factions' did not exist in the context we are describing, and as a result, a common RSDLP framework could only have been constructed as a result of partial and temporary co-operation between partisans of opposing views. Consequently, the fact that Lenin both fought and co-operated with the Bund, *Rabochee Delo* and the Southern Union in the period we are about to discuss should not come as a surprise. The ongoing conflict did not negate Lenin's commitment to treating his opponents fairly, or his commitment to subordinating his own faction to commonly recognised rules and norms that would regulate the factional conflict within the RSDLP.

i) Two Contrasting Methods of Organising a Congress

Accordingly, the investigation now moves to the months following the final split in the emigration at the end of 1901. During this time, both sides began to campaign among the social-democratic organisations in Russia in an attempt to mobilise support for their views. At first glance, it seems that *Iskra* had certain advantages over its opponent, as for more than a year it had been smuggling its illegal literature into Russia along with other Marxist literature, establishing a team of often homeless, passportless and jobless agents whose function it was to supply the paper to the local organisations.⁴³⁴ It has been established for example, that in July 1901, the Russian section of *Iskra* was possessed of nine agents, two of whom were running an underground press in Kishinev, with others based in St Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkov, Odessa, Kiev and Vilno.⁴³⁵ We also know that a few of these agents had no fixed abode.⁴³⁶ Around these professional agents were gathered small bands of trusted volunteers who were recruited to do much of the difficult and dangerous work, whilst

⁴³⁴ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 93-360; OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, 24-61

⁴³⁵ PB Axelrod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma* 47

⁴³⁶ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 222; L Haimson et al, *Three Russian Revolutionaries*, 134-46

the 'professional' directed things from behind the scenes, effectively remaining in hiding.⁴³⁷ Together, these two types of activist made up the Russian *Iskra* organisation, a body which has everything in common with Lenin's notion of an 'organisation of revolutionaries' that he describes in *What Is To Be Done?*⁴³⁸ Following the 'second' emigre split this organisation held its founding congress in Samara during January 1902, at which its future strategy was outlined.⁴³⁹ The meeting decided to place at the core of the organisation a central committee of sixteen 'professionals', who were to be distributed to all areas of the country, with the exception of two 'flying' agents, who moved from place to place.⁴⁴⁰ Their job was not simply the distribution of the newspaper: in addition they had to campaign to win supporters for its views, especially among the leading bodies of the local organisations, the committees. This was expressed in the following congress resolution:

Отношение к местным комитетам. Каждый член Ц.К., являясь в данное место, должен стремиться к приобретению там наибольшего влияния и иметь конечной целью присоединение данного комитета к организации Искры и к признанию её партийным органом. Для этого он 1) входит автономно в местную группу, предлагая ей услугу по доставке литература, газеты, по печатанию прокламаций, заявлений и пр. 2) если, несмотря на все усилия, Комитет остается враждебным - он образует свою собственную группу и свой местный комитет.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 222; OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, 26-33. In Pyatnitsky's memoir, the local 'agent' appears to have been SO Tsederbaum, Martov's older brother, who is assisted by the author and other local volunteers. Seemingly, the 'agents' together made up the 'central committee of the *Iskra* organisation', whilst part-time and full-time volunteers such as Pyatnitsky were the organisation's ordinary members. Krzhizhanovskaia's report to Lenin about the Samara meeting also refers to the 'election' of this central committee of sixteen, which suggests a broader membership.

⁴³⁸ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, v 460-7

⁴³⁹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 222-3

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, viii 222 [paragraphs 2 & 3]

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, viii 223 [paragraph 5]: 'Relations towards Local Committees: Every member of the C.C (central committee) located in a particular place should strive to acquire the greatest possible influence and have the final goal of uniting the given committee to the *Iskra* organisation and to the recognition of *Iskra* as the party newspaper. For this he 1) enters the local group on his own initiative, offering services to it in the field of literature provision, newspapers, the printing of proclamations and announcements, etc 2) if, despite all efforts, the Committee proves hostile - he forms his own group and his own local committee.'

Indeed, committees where a critical mass was sympathetic to *Iskra* were urged not only to declare their support for the views of the *Iskra* newspaper, but to fuse directly with the *Iskra* organisation. This process involved the co-option of *Iskra* members onto the committee, a declaration of support in the *Iskra* newspaper, the remitting of funds to *Iskra* and above all, participation by the local organisations in what *Iskra* termed 'All-Russian' work.⁴⁴² In other words, members of the local organisation would be detailed for work distributing literature, setting up new printing presses and stores, setting up social-democratic groups in new areas and other tasks conducive to the good of the social-democratic movement as a whole. In this fashion, a bloc of well-co-ordinated, mutually supporting pro-*Iskra* local organisations was expected to emerge over time and one gets the sense that this is what Lenin was talking about when, in his *Declaration of the Editorial Board of Iskra*, he spoke of unity being 'worked for'.

The Economists had nothing quite so sophisticated with which to oppose *Iskra*, but they initially had the far greater advantage of clear bases of support within the most influential Russian organisations. In particular, the Union Abroad seemed to have the sympathy of the Bund leadership and the newly formed Union of Southern Committees and Associations, which comprised about half a dozen groups between Kiev and Kharkov in the north, and the Black Sea in the south.⁴⁴³ This suggested that anything up to twenty local groups were on the side of the Economists, at a time when *Iskra*, though increasingly well-known, had yet to obtain a solid constituency.⁴⁴⁴ For these reasons, the established differences of opinion on how to organise a congress took on a particularly sharp practical form during this period. If *Iskra* wanted to delay, in order to 'work for unity', the Economists had all the more reason to proceed with all due haste and appoint new leading bodies: the balance of factional forces was at this stage favourable to them. Nor was this situation a matter of coincidence, as it reflected

⁴⁴² VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 178-9

⁴⁴³ OA Ermanskii, *Otchet s"ezda iuzhnikh komitetov*, 10

⁴⁴⁴ We base this calculation on the description given by VP Akimov of the Bund in 1904, which identifies fourteen local committees, two regional trade unions and fourteen groups in small towns not yet granted the status of committees. [VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 227]

the fundamentally different attitude each group took to the RSDLP. *Iskra* wanted to change organisational relations by merging all groups into one and was thus obliged to engage in a more or less lengthy campaign of persuasion. The Economists' organisational policy, by contrast, was essentially to give a party-constitutional blessing to the *status quo*, a loose federation of groups. On this basis it could easily gain the *immediate* support of significant regional organisations, such as the Bund, whose actual structures appear to have inspired the organisational formulae advanced by the Economists at the 1900 congress 'attempt. These conservative views are most clearly expressed in the draft constitution which was to have been presented to this congress. The third resolution dealing with organisational matters reads:

Съезд полагает: а) Создать окружные районные организации близлежащих городов с конспирацией сношений между этими последними, сношения ЦК установить только с районными организациями, а функции ЦК сузить.⁴⁴⁵

The document continues:

Организации этих районных союзов должна быть такова: крупнейший город с наиболее солидным и прочным движением в данном районе берет на себя обязанность организовать возможно близкие сношения с другими городами своего района. Для этих городов он 1)издает орган района, 2) доставляет литература, 3) печатает (в случае необходимости) листки и прокламации, 4) по возможности распределяет людей, 5) ведет союзную кассу, 6) если нужно, устраивает местные съезды 7) представляет на общерусских съездах, 8)исполняет разные конспиративные поручения.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-demokraticheskoe dvizhenie*, i 320 [article 3 part 7]: 'The congress proposes: a) To create a circle of regional organisations of closely-situated towns with conspiratorial relations between these, relations with the C.C. (central committee) to be constructed only with the regional organisations, and to narrow the functions of the C.C.'

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., i 321 [paragraph 3 part 7]: 'The organisation of these regional unions should be thus: the biggest town with the most firm and solid movements in the given region take responsibility for the organisation of the closest possible relations with the other towns in their region. For these towns it: 1) publishes a regional newspaper, 2) provides literature, 3) prints (in case of necessity) leaflets and proclamations, 4) in accordance with what is practicable, distributes personnel, 5) manages the union's finances, 6) if necessary, organises union congresses, 7) attends all-Russian congresses, 8) carries out various conspiratorial duties.'

In this Economist proposition we meet with the idea of very strong regional organisations, which 'narrow' (*souzhit*) the functions of the central committee. Not only that, they seem to take away the rights of the local groups to be represented at the RSDLP congress, whilst also absorbing a large number of their practical functions. Consequently, we are in a position to hypothesise that this type of *federal* arrangement was designed to replicate the one obtaining inside the Bund, in so far as the latter also had its own separate newsheets, émigré department, congresses and central committee, with the last of these exercising fairly unmitigated authority over local groups in periods between Bund congresses.⁴⁴⁷ If this hypothesis is accepted, the conclusion follows that the Layaants-Kopel'zon RSDLP constitution represented a promise not to touch these pre-existing Bund institutions in return for which it seems that the Economists were offered this organisation's support in its struggle with *Iskra*.⁴⁴⁸ Also of note in this connection is the fact that the Union of Southern Associations and Committees, of which Layaants appears to have been a member, was formed on very similar lines in so far as it appointed the pre-existing *Iuzhnii Rabochii* as the Union's official regional newspaper, and also elected its own central committee at its founding congress early in 1902.⁴⁴⁹ However, as this event clearly postdates the 1900 congress 'attempt', there can be little doubt as to where the organisers of the latter got their organisational ideas.

With these two points of support - the Bund and the Southern Union - the Economists actually looked likely to win the battle against *Iskra* inside Russia during the period following the second émigré split. This would probably have resulted in the entire RSDLP being reorganised on federal lines. It was most likely on the basis of this expectation that the Economists reached the idea of attempting for a second time to call an official party congress. The actual meeting this plan produced took place at short notice in March 1902, the venue being Belostock, but in the end it was not declared an official RSDLP congress owing to insufficient interest from Russian

⁴⁴⁷ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 221-30

⁴⁴⁸ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 65; *KPSS v resoliutsiakh*, 41. It also needs to be recognised that the Bund did not need too much encouragement to go against *Iskra*, given their previous clashes over the question of whether Jews should be integrated into the Russian labour movement, or should form separate, purely Jewish organisations [*Iskra* 7 (Aug. 1901), 6 & 8 (Sept. 1901), 6].

⁴⁴⁹ OA Ermanskii, *Otchet S"ezda iuzhnikh komitetov*, 10-11

social-democratic organisations.⁴⁵⁰ This episode is interesting because it illustrates the somewhat shabby organisational methods used by the Economist tendency, and their clear disregard for commonly-held notions of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. In this sense, the Belostock meeting dispels any notion that the main difference between *Iskra* and its opponents during this period was that the former were supporters of dictatorial or manipulative methods during the period we are discussing, whereas the latter were essentially democratic and open. Despite the attempts of at least one supposedly serious historian, their political differences cannot be reduced to such a simple, value-laden opposition.⁴⁵¹ The Belostock episode is more interesting still in so far as it forced Lenin to articulate his own counter-strategy for organising an effective party congress in the form of a letter to the meeting protesting the hasty and secretive manner of its convocation.⁴⁵² This letter is incredibly important in that, given the meeting's failure to meet the generally-agreed requirements for an RSDLP congress, Lenin was actually obliged to implement the plan he described over the following year and a half. For this reason in particular, the Belostock conference is therefore our natural starting point when it comes to showing how Lenin's organisational methods were fundamentally more democratic than those of his Economist, Bundist and Southern Union opponents, despite the fact that Lenin was an advocate of organisational centralism, the fusion of all organisations into one, whereas his opponents were advocates of federalism.

The origins of creating an Economist-dominated congress at Belostock in March 1902 lay in the immediate aftermath of the second émigré split of the previous October, in so far as the Union Abroad at this point decided that a conference of Russian organisations should be called to finally resolve the émigré dispute. This intention was known to *Iskra* and in fact it seems to have provided the pretext for Lenin writing *What Is To Be Done?*⁴⁵³ However, *Iskra* was not aware until 3rd March that the meeting, which was due to start on 21st March, had acquired pretensions

⁴⁵⁰ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 65; KPSS v *resoliutsiakh*, 41-44; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 28-9

⁴⁵¹ J.L.H. Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 107-8; ST Possony, *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*, 95

⁴⁵² VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 97-106

⁴⁵³ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 214-5

towards being a congress.⁴⁵⁴ Not only that, the only information circulated concerning the purpose of this 'congress' was as follows:

А) Экономическая борьба и средства борьбы (стачки, бойкот, демонстрация, экономический террор). Б) Политическая борьба и средства (демонстрации, террор наступательный и оборонительный) В) Политическая агитация. Г) 1-е мая. Д) Отношения к оппозиционным элементам. Е) Отношения к революционным группам, не входящим в партию. Ж) Организации партии. З) Центральный орган и заграничное представительство и заграничные партийные организации.⁴⁵⁵

This represented an abridgement of procedure relative to the previous congress attempt, when draft resolutions on each question that was to be discussed were circulated in advance of the meeting and, in the same spirit, Lenin, Martov and Potresov had offered to make a 'personal tour' of all the main organisations to discuss their 'declaration of faith'. The advantages of this type of procedure are fairly obvious: they permit members of an organisation sending representatives to a congress to discuss the questions on which their representative is being asked to vote. This can accordingly influence their choice of representative and, once they have made that choice, allow them to influence the way he or she votes. Equally, people not attending the congress can submit changes to the resolutions, and usually opposing resolutions, through these representatives. In these ways, rather than just the people actually present at the meeting, the whole party participates in the work of the congress and the political consciousness of ordinary members can be raised in this way. By the same token, the procedure also offers at least some guarantee that the leading institutions of the party reflect the opinions of the rank and file. On the other hand, simply circulating a list of topics to be discussed, especially without an explanation of why they have been chosen does not permit this kind of structured discussion based around the strengths and weaknesses of definite propositions, in other words, around resolutions. Indeed, there is more than a hint that such a discussion would be opposed

⁴⁵⁴ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 97

⁴⁵⁵ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 227: 'А) Economic struggle and means of struggle (strikes, boycott, demonstration, economic terror). Б) Political struggle and means (demonstrations, terror: offensive and defensive). В) Political Agitation. Д) May Day. Е) Relation with oppositional elements. F) Relations with revolutionary groups that are not part of the party. F) The organisation of the party. Г) The central party newspaper, foreign representation and émigré organisation of the party.'

by the organisers of the Belostock meeting, ostensibly in the name of secrecy. This view gains credibility partially from the short notice at which the congress was called: Lenin receives the invitation two and a half weeks before the meeting was due to open. Given that false passports⁴⁵⁶ would probably have to be obtained, along with several other necessities for illegal travel, and that members of the emigration were distributed around several cities in Europe, the possibility of this broader membership having any input into the congress was simply non-existent. Organisations inside Russia would probably also have had similar practical problems, especially given the fact that there were at this stage two large federations in existence, the local organisations of which had almost certainly not even been informed of the fact of the congress, let alone permitted to contribute to its work. This conclusion is based on an unusual instruction, circulated along with the congress agenda:

Примите все меры к тому, чтобы широкая публика не узнала о готовящемся съезде.⁴⁵⁷

The 'broad public' here almost certainly refers primarily to the party rank and file, the 'public opinion of the party', rather than the broader mass of non-social-democrats. This is because the main way either could find out about the fact a congress was taking place could be through an announcement in underground newspapers, or proclamations printed on underground presses, neither of which were read by broad sections of the public.⁴⁵⁸ Almost certainly, the organisers are here instructing social-democratic editors not to publish such an announcement which, we must emphasise, would not need to include the details of time and place, matters which would have been of great interest to the police. On the contrary, unlike the 1900 attempt, where the intended political content of the congress was published in advance, in the form of draft resolutions, the very fact of the congress now appears to be a secret, an arrangement which shuts off the possibility of ordinary party members having any influence on it.

⁴⁵⁶ OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, 55; L Haimson et al, *Three Russian Revolutionaries*, 134-5

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., viii 227: 'Take all measures to ensure the broad public does not find out about the congress we are preparing.'

⁴⁵⁸ *Rabochee Delo* 6 (Apr. 1901), 28-33, which provides an excellent account of the reading habits of the St Petersburg workers and their attitudes to political literature, allows us to draw this conclusion.

On finding out about the plans to convert the conference into a congress, Lenin drafted a letter of protest and apparently sent it to Byelostock in the hands of FI Dan, who was later a Menshevik historian and who does not report this event in his own account of the Russian social-democratic movement.⁴⁵⁹ This appears to be because the letter reveals some of the more democratic aspects of Lenin's organisational thinking that Dan is so strangely quiet about it. Lenin begins the letter with the demand that the organisers retain their original plan of holding a conference to discuss the specific question of the émigré split.⁴⁶⁰ His next point is to criticise the agenda, posing the questions of whether it is a draft or a final version, and if it is the latter, on whose authority it has been approved.⁴⁶¹ He also notes its failure to refer to the question of the party programme, despite the fact that the First Congress identified this task as a priority.⁴⁶² In this way, he draws attentions to its shortcoming both from the traditionally 'revolutionary' and the traditionally 'Economist' view of the RSDLP, showing that the planned meeting has established no real links with either the 'narrow radical' party of 1898, nor the 'broad and inclusive' model promoted in 1900. Having noted that the agenda seems to be inspired by Economism, and that this is fatal in a political situation in which the anti-autocratic mood is being exploited by non-social democratic revolutionary forces, Lenin then refers in more general terms to the democratic shortcomings of the congress:

(Secondly), it is astonishing that the agenda raises (a few days before the congress!) questions that should be discussed only after thorough preparations, only when it is possible to adopt really definite and comprehensible decisions on them—otherwise it is better not to discuss them at all for the time being. For example, points E and F: the attitude towards opposition and other revolutionary trends. These questions must be discussed in advance, from all angles, reports drawn up on them, and differences in existing shades made clear—only then can we adopt decisions that would actually offer something new, that would serve as a real *guide* for the whole Party, and not merely repeat some traditional “generalisation.” In point of fact, just consider: can we in a few days prepare a comprehensive and well-grounded decision that would take into consideration all the practical requirements of the movement on the questions of the attitude towards the “revolutionary-socialist

⁴⁵⁹ T Dan, *The Origins of Bolshevism*, 234-5

⁴⁶⁰ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 97

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vi 97

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, vi 99

Svoboda group” or towards the new-born “Socialist-Revolutionary Party”? ⁴⁶³

Here, Lenin appears to be applying his notion of 'working for unity' to the concrete question of congress organisation. What he says could be viewed as pragmatism pure and simple, but this pragmatism is clearly that of an individual committed to meaningful debate inside the party. Rather than using congress simply to secure the dominance of one tendency over another by means of a hasty mobilisation of forces, which then vote through a series of verbal formulations reflecting their established views, he sees it as an opportunity for full and properly-informed debate in which new information and ideas can come to light. The result should be a policy that can guide the party through the concrete circumstances in which it finds itself, not simply the registration of the balance of factional forces inside the party. To achieve this, preparatory work is necessary, both in the sense of researching all the relevant information, and the drafting of provisional theses for consideration by congress. Significantly, Lenin does not seem to regard this preparatory work as an opportunity to impose uniform views on the congress itself: on the contrary, 'existing shades must be made clear', the assumption seeming to be that congress would then be in a position to decide between more than one properly-informed opinion. These remarks therefore strengthen the argument that the revolutionary Lenin, rather than the reformist Economists, had a greater grasp of the meaning of party democracy during this period.

In the light of his view of what a congress should really achieve, Lenin then sketches out an alternative agenda for the Belostock meeting, the greater part of which is dedicated to preparations for a future RSDLP congress, the assumption being that the meeting would renounce its own pretensions to this title. Lenin's first point in this connection is the idea that the meeting should establish some agreed principles of representation for the future congress, determining what type of party organisations should be present, thus properly establishing its roots in the Russian social-democratic movement. It has already been noted in this connection that the documents from the 1900 congress attempt seem to indicate a drastically reduced scheme of representation, in the sense that only the central committees of different regional

⁴⁶³ Ibid., vi 99

organisations such as the Bund and the Southern Union would be allowed to send representatives, and not the local branch organisations - the local committees - united by these regional organisations. In this light, the following suggestion by Lenin:

We should discuss the general principles of representation and the fullest possible representation (i. e., so as to ensure representation of definite pre-selected committees and certain groups, and possibly also of study circles of Russian Social-Democrats, to say nothing of the comparatively easy task of securing representatives from the two Social-Democratic organisations abroad; a procedure should also be adopted for discussing the question of inviting to the congress such organisations that may be founded in the interim between conference and congress, etc., etc.)⁴⁶⁴

seems to represent a much more democratic method of operation. Lenin, unlike his federalist opponents appears to advocate the 'fullest scheme of representation', including somewhat ambiguously-defined committees, groups and study-circles. Normally, a 'committee' in the jargon of the movement referred to the essentially self-selecting leadership of the social-democratic movement in a large town.⁴⁶⁵ Thus the Southern Union was made up of committees from Nikolayev, Odessa, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav and Kishinev as well as at least one non-committee 'organisation', the 'Odessa Group of Revolutionary Social-Democrats'.⁴⁶⁶ The last of these appears to have been a splinter group. The Bund, meanwhile had committees in as many as fourteen towns during this period, but the movement in at least eleven other locations was not considered sufficiently large for its local leadership to be awarded official 'committee' status by the Bund's central committee.⁴⁶⁷ It seems that Lenin intends all such bodies to be represented *directly* at the party congress and not indirectly, through members of the central committee of the Southern Union and the central committee of the Bund. Further, Lenin refers to 'study circles' in his plan, which were essentially groups of five to ten workers who followed courses in Marxist theory. There appear to have been several of these in every city which was possessed of a social-democratic movement. For example, when Lenin was active in St Petersburg, for example, he led a study circle in the Nevsky gate area of the city, recruits to which were workers apparently drawn from a local Sunday school where

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., vi 102

⁴⁶⁵ C Bobrovskaja, *Twenty Years in Underground Russia*, 39-40

⁴⁶⁶ OA Ermanskii, *Otchet S'ezda iuzhnykh komitetov; Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 234n

⁴⁶⁷ VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 227

Krupskaya was a teacher.⁴⁶⁸ The Bund also organised a great number of these circles in each of the towns where it was organised, work carried out alongside its organisation of illegal trade unions.⁴⁶⁹ Consequently, by advocating the inclusion of the study circles, Lenin appeared to be suggesting that each town would be entitled to several delegates at the congress, and that among them should be workers, provided that they had a sufficiently high level of political understanding to make a meaningful contribution to the decision-making process. The overall significance of this suggestion can be expressed numerically as follows. According to the federal formula supported by the Economists, an RSDLP congress, at which only regional 'central committees' were represented, could be made up of as few as a dozen individuals, which would include perhaps two or three representatives from each of the main national or regional federations, plus representative from the emigration and the main party publications.⁴⁷⁰ By contrast, Lenin's scheme of representation suggests that the congress would include delegates from around twenty local committees, plus maybe two or three additional delegates from each town, the result being a congress involving up to hundred individuals. Naturally, this is very strong evidence for Lenin's democratic sensibilities.

In this letter, Lenin makes several further suggestions as to how the remaining institutions of the party might be revived. The most significant appears to have been the idea that the Economist-dominated conference elect an organising committee which, as well as ensuring that all the plans made by the meeting were carried through, should also start to carry out a number of general tasks, such as the transportation of illegal literature around the country, the creation of new underground print shops and the issuing of leaflets in the name of the RSDLP as a whole.⁴⁷¹ He also imagines that the committee would offer these services to broader labour and student organisations whose aims were in keeping with the RSDLP, but which were not

⁴⁶⁸ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 6-7; OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, 16-22; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 232-5

⁴⁶⁹ OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik* 16-22; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 227-9

⁴⁷⁰ In these documents, Odessa, St Petersburg, Moscow, the Urals and the Bund (*sic*) appear to be identified as the main regions [AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 320 [article 3]]

⁴⁷¹ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 102-3 [article 3]

affiliated to it.⁴⁷² This organising committee appears to have been a kind of *ad hoc* central committee to the RSDLP, provisional in the sense that it had not been elected by an official congress of the party, but would nonetheless carry out the main functions of such a body until such a congress took place.⁴⁷³ As a part of the RSDLP, and because of its unofficial status, it seems that the organising committee would include individuals from all the main political tendencies so as to gain maximum support.⁴⁷⁴ At the same time, it would take over many of the functions up to this point carried out exclusively by the *Iskra* organisation, the services of which Lenin offered to this proposed committee. This might appear like a clever factional manoeuvre, the aim of which was to get all the tendencies in the RSDLP to carry out the plan for party reunification hatched by *Iskra* alone, but further examination of the document suggests that this is not the case, and that it is more likely that Lenin hoped that the Bund and the Southern Union would offer their 'services' in exactly the same way, even though this is not stated explicitly. This is because Lenin also suggests the meeting elect a commission to reconcile the two drafts of the party programme which were at this point being prepared by himself and Plekhanov.⁴⁷⁵ In other words, whilst insisting that the Plekhanovites had a key role to play in formulating the party's official world view, he also seemed to recognise that its views should be subject to some form of wider control, and that the input of the wider party into the draft was essential. Equally, in relation to the question of the party newspaper, Lenin does not simply insist that *Iskra*, as the most frequently appearing and most widely-distributed paper should be automatically considered for this role. On the contrary, whilst drawing attention to the fact that it is the only All-Russian social-democratic fortnightly, he identifies the aim of producing a weekly title by combining its forces with other elements present at the meeting.⁴⁷⁶ Thus, rather than plotting a crude factional takeover, Lenin appears to be proposing several forms of collaboration between all tendencies present at the meeting, only one of which was the organising committee.

⁴⁷² Ibid., vi 102

⁴⁷³ Ibid., vi 102-3

⁴⁷⁴ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 29, 35

⁴⁷⁵ *Leninskii Sbornik*, ii 15-171; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 103

⁴⁷⁶ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 103-4

In the light of Lenin's behaviour in the previous chapter, this might seem hard for some to accept or, alternatively, appear like some sudden switch of position. However, it is not so much Lenin as the situation that has changed. Previously, his main goal was to secure the position of Plekhanovism in the RSDLP and thus to prevent it developing into a clearly reformist organisation. This entire situation had been created by Plekhanov's tactical mistake of splitting from the Union Abroad, this cutting off *Osvobozhdenie Truda* from an RSDLP which had the support of social-democratic organisations in several dozen Russian cities. In doing so, Plekhanov had appeared to be turning his back on these Russian organisations, thus strengthening the argument that the RSDLP was not a revolutionary Marxist organisation. Lenin's manoeuvres rectified this situation, but only to the degree that the damage done by Plekhanov was repaired, so that by October 1901 the RSDLP was more or less in the situation it had been in prior to April 1900: that is, with competing Economist and revolutionary factions. Having achieved this goal, Lenin was not really concerned with pursuing this type of battle with the Economists any further, in the sense of trying to consolidate his gains by driving them out of the RSDLP completely. The reasons for this are fairly clear: if we go back to the period preceding the split in the Union Abroad, we find Lenin collaborating quite happily with the Economists, for all his ideological differences with them: only thus can we explain his willingness to accept the editorial post in *Rabochaia Gazeta*, his initial refusal to criticise *Rabochee Delo* in the *Draft Declaration of the Editorial Board of Iskra*, and so on. Whilst he was quite prepared to speak out against the excesses of Economism during this period, this was never translated into organisational manipulations. Following the resolution of the Plekhanov 'problem', which we characterised as the reinsertion of *Osvobozhdenie Truda* back into the RSDLP, Lenin essentially reverted to his previous position. The basis of it, in both its earlier and later versions, was a desire to reconstruct the RSDLP involving all elements who claimed to support it. This implies that, throughout the whole period we are studying Lenin was essentially in favour of a pluralistic, multi-tendency RSDLP, incorporating both revolutionary and reformist socialist trends. Plekhanov's mistake upset this equilibrium and therefore had to be corrected using whatever means necessary. Once it was resolved, attempt to restore the *relative* harmony could be initiated, in the sense that the conflict between

reformist and revolutionary would from this point on take the form of an open and fair competition for power and influence within a common party.

ii) Revolutionary Marxism and Reformism in the Context of RSDLP Democracy

The main features of Lenin's plan were accepted by the Belostock meeting, in so far as it abandoned its pretences to be the Second Congress of the RSDLP, and elected an organising committee for joint work towards a far more representative and well-prepared meeting that could more justifiably take the name.⁴⁷⁷ However, as has just been indicated, such all-sided agreement on best way to develop the RSDLP could not mean an end to the fundamental opposition between Economism and revolutionary Marxism that now characterised the party. The immediate result of this appears to have been that, whilst Lenin was prepared to support and respect the decisions of a multi-tendency organising committee, the conflict between revolutionary and reformist now began to take the form of a pre-congress campaign aiming at winning over various local organisations, the goal being to persuade them to send *Iskra* supporters and not Economists to the congress at which the party's future would be decided.⁴⁷⁸ It seems that Lenin must have conceived this campaign in quite broad terms. As had been agreed at the *Iskra* congress in January, committees won to *Iskra* were to be absorbed into the Russian *Iskra* organisation, freely exchanging personnel and funds among themselves and thereby forming a centralised unit.⁴⁷⁹ The short-term goal of this process appeared to be the creation of an *Iskra* bloc of local organisation, probably based in the Russian 'north' and on the Volga, which could appear at first glance as a third regional federation, comparable to the Bund, which occupied the western territories, and the Southern Union, whose basis was the Ukraine. With the prospect of a congress, Lenin clearly imagined there would be some form of electoral competition between these blocs, with each attempting to poach local organisations from one another in a struggle to secure the nomination of sympathetic delegates. At any rate, *Iskra* was in a particularly strong position to do

⁴⁷⁷ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh*, 40-1; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 28-9

⁴⁷⁸ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 101

⁴⁷⁹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 223; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 178-9

this, given its all-Russian character, even if as a proportion of the party as a whole it was clearly in a minority. The paper and its agents were distributed in every area of the country, and accordingly acquired groups of sympathisers in Kiev and Ekaterinoslav, for example, despite the fact that these were clearly in the territory covered by the Southern Union. By contrast, the Southern Union only produced a regional paper, *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and had no contacts outside its core territory. Likewise, the Bund appeared to be in a weak position in so far as its clearly Jewish identity was a barrier to its expansion which, in any case could only have been into the territory of its ally, the Southern Union owing to the discriminatory laws against Jews residing beyond the pale of residence.⁴⁸⁰ Eager to capitalise on this situation, Lenin urged the *Iskra* agents to engage in a renewed struggle for influence within all the local organisations, with particular emphasis on the south and St Petersburg, which at this stage were dominated by the Economists, but in which all three main organisations seemed to have a certain presence.⁴⁸¹ In other words, having formalised the idea of a pluralistic party with the opposing trends in this same party, Lenin initiated a struggle to make the *Iskra* group as strong as possible in relation to these opponents, bearing in mind its minority status, and possibly with a mind to the fact that the majority would use its power to pass a federalistic constitution at the forthcoming congress. By consolidating *Iskra* in the north, Lenin was clearly preparing for battle on the terrain of a federal arrangement, whilst by expanding into the South, he was creating an effective argument against such an arrangement in the first place.

When Lenin advocated this course of action, it seems that he was not fully aware of the fact that a huge police raid had taken place on the organisations involved in the Belostock meeting, hence his reference in the letter to the need to 'undermine' the Southern Union, a job which had by this stage been carried out perfectly well by the *gendarmierie*.⁴⁸² This created a rather complex situation. The spokesman of the

⁴⁸⁰ *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sep. 1901), 125; C Bobrovskaja, *Twenty Years in Underground Russia*, 10, 14, 24 31-32; LD Trotsky, *My Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 46-7

⁴⁸¹ *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sep. 1901), 125; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 212-3; 233-4; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 227

⁴⁸² *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 274-5 [n6]

organising committee at the actual Second Congress of the RSDLP reports that

The (Belostock) conference had, incidentally, made provision that in the event of the Organising Committee proving unable to function, it would be the duty of those taking part in the conference to re-establish it.⁴⁸³

In accordance with this provision, which had in all probability been advanced by the *Iskra* representatives themselves, the one surviving member of the organising committee, a representative of the Bund, indicated his desire to re-establish the organising committee, a message which brought to Lenin's attention, presumably through the London-based Foreign Committee of the Bund.⁴⁸⁴ Lenin, in his turn, informed the leadership of the Russian *Iskra* organisation of this fact and wrote them the following note:

We have just given the *Bundist* contact with you. This concerns the congress. You and he (+ the bureau or someone else) must form a Russian Committee for preparing the congress. Behave as *impressively as you can* and act with *caution*. Take on yourself the greatest possible number of districts in which you undertake to prepare for the congress, refer to the bureau (giving it some other name), in a word, make sure that the whole thing is *entirely in your hands*, leaving the Bund, for the time being, confined to the Bund. We shall begin negotiations here about a rapprochement over here, and will inform you immediately.

And so, for the time being, *have in mind* the composition of a Russian Committee for Preparing the Congress which is most advantageous for us (you may find it convenient to say that you have already formed this committee, and are very glad to have the Bund *participate* or something like this). Take on yourself, *without fail*, to be secretary in this committee. These are the first steps. And then we shall see.

⁴⁸³ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 29

⁴⁸⁴ The Foreign Committee of the Bund produced the fortnightly newssheet, *Poslednie Izvestiia*, allegedly under the auspices of Abraham Nathanson, with a correspondence address of 13 Brantridge Street, Burdett Road London, the site of which is a short walk from Mile End Tube station. Lenin at this stage was living at an address off the Gray's Inn Road. Neither address exists today, owing to World War Two bomb damage and slum clearances. The contact details of the Bund, just like those published in *Iskra* are probably those of a drop-off point, such as a busy local labour movement facility used by lots of people, where messengers unknown to the police could collect mail without attracting attention to themselves, thus leading spies to the newspaper's real headquarters.

I say have the composition “in mind” to have as free a hand as possible: don’t commit yourself to the Bund right away (you can say, for example, that connections have been established with the Volga, the Caucasus, the centre—we have a man from over there—and the South—we’re sending two down there), and make yourself master of the undertaking. But do all this most carefully, without rousing objections.⁴⁸⁵

Lenin's meaning here is very clear. Obligated by the agreement at the Belostock conference to help in the reconstruction of the organising committee, he nonetheless seeks to use it to consolidate the factional advantage of *Iskra*. He employs bluff and a certain element of deceit with the aim of preventing the Bund from using the organising committee to establish itself in new areas and, of course, to capture precisely these areas for his own side. This in itself is not a violation of the Belostock decision, nor could anyone seriously argue that Lenin's desire to get the better of the Bund represented a breach of its spirit, even if the methods he advocates at this point are not entirely comradely. Lenin clearly instructs his colleague to abide by the terms of the cross-factional agreement. Because of this, we are presented with a contradictory picture of *Iskra*, which on the one hand represents revolutionary Marxism, and as such battles different reformist organisations for a predominant position in the RSDLP, in this case on the organising committee. On the other hand and alongside this commitment to a power-struggle, there is a commitment to the principle that RSDLP institutions should be established with the consent of all the main shades of opinion inside the party. It is only possible to resolve this contradiction by concluding that Lenin supported a competitive, pluralistic regime inside the RSDLP in which different strands of opinion came to agreements on the question of how to make their struggle with one another a law-governed and democratic process, a type of agreement which did not in the least negative their fundamental rivalry with one another.

This said, it can seem that this willingness to fight as well as to co-operate may have contributed to the temporary suspension of work on the organising committee during the summer and early Autumn of 1902, the circumstances being as follows. From the beginning of March 1902, many professional agents and leading volunteer members languished in Kiev's Lukianovskaia gaol, owing to a raid on the

⁴⁸⁵ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxvi 113

Iskra regional conference in Kiev, which had been held shortly before the Belostock meeting.⁴⁸⁶ Crucially, it seems that the capture of Silvin and Babushkin, both of whom were travelling agents, made it very difficult for the *Iskra* organisation to carry out its organising committee obligations.⁴⁸⁷ We say this because at a later stage Lenin makes it clear that the job of an organising committee agent involved much travelling and a totally illegal existence, in other words one in which the agent never registers with the authorities.⁴⁸⁸ Whatever the case, the arrests appear to have produced a change of tactics, possibly decided by the Russian *Iskra* organisation itself, which essentially revolved around rebuilding its own structures and consolidating its position in the northern area of the country, whilst abandoning the task of reestablishing the organising committee, a departure which appears to reflect a break with the spirit, if not the letter of the Belostock agreement. Evidence for this change of tactics can be found in the fierce faction fight that broke out in St Petersburg at this time between the supporters of *Rabochee Delo* and the local *Iskra* group, led by I I Radchenko.⁴⁸⁹ This seems significant in so far as Krupskaya characterises Radchenko as a travelling *Iskra* agent, which could suggest that he was redeployed to St Petersburg when he could have worked on the organising committee.⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, during this struggle, Radchenko received the hearty encouragement of Lenin, which leads us to the conclusion that Lenin too was prepared to ignore the Belostock decision when it came to re-establishing the organising committee.⁴⁹¹ Indeed, it can appear that he subordinates this commitment that of strengthening the *Iskra* faction at the expense of the Economists, especially in St Petersburg.

In fact, there can be little doubt that this is exactly what happened, albeit for a short period dating from May to August 1902. The question we therefore have to ask is how this episode relates to Lenin's overall strategy. Previously, we suggested that a new phase in Lenin's political activity opened up with his victory at the Belostock conference, characterised by a desire to rebuild the RSDLP as a multi-tendency and

⁴⁸⁶ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 212; OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, 40;

⁴⁸⁷ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 59, 78, 82; OA Piatnitskii, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, 43

⁴⁸⁸ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 137

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, vi 176-82, 231-52; xxxiv 116-7, 126-7, 131-3, 135-6

⁴⁹⁰ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 78; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 244-5; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 176-85

⁴⁹¹ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 176

democratic socialist labour party. We contend that this remains the case, despite Lenin's apparent lapse, following the arrests, into a position in which he appears to be only interested in building a revolutionary Marxist organisation. This is, first of all, because the lapse was clearly temporary and, as we shall see below, once the Russian *Iskra*'s position was properly consolidated, Lenin once more began to agitate for the creation of a new organising committee. Thus it seems that his policy was to fight for a new RSDLP congress, prepared in accordance with his argument at Belostock, but only on condition that this did not damage the position of *Iskra* in relation to its factional opponents. This would be for the fairly good reason that the alternative strategy of trying to dominate the organising committee and trying to marginalise the Bund could well have led to a situation in which *Iskra*, almost alone, created a democratic and well-prepared congress only then to have found itself incapable of carrying out the additional work of campaigning for *Iskra* views among the organisations eligible to send delegates to it. Concretely, it seems that by taking on extra organising committee work in order to keep the Bund out of the Ukraine, positions in the north would have been lost to supporters of *Rabochee Delo*. The result would have been a reformist-dominated congress prepared mainly by the work of revolutionaries, an obvious tactical mistake for *Iskra*. The question remains whether *Iskra*'s refusal to make such a mistake, not to mention its apparent failure to offer to co-operate with the Bund on more equitable terms in the organising committee once it became clear how weak its own organisation had become, represented violations of the organisational principles we discussed earlier. It is hard to provide an answer to these points, beyond noting that the Belostock meeting, stipulated only that the organising committee could be re-formed following its collapse by any faction, and that it had to include all major groupings in the party.⁴⁹²

As shall now be demonstrated, Lenin ultimately fulfilled this condition, albeit in his own time and in his own way, so as to bring maximum benefit to *Iskra*. Specifically, this shows that having pluralistic political principles is not the same thing as the complete self-negation of one's own views to the advantage of somebody else's, and that concretely, Lenin's commitment to party democracy during this period did come at the expense of his support for revolutionary principles or for an organised

⁴⁹² *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 28-9, 35

revolutionary faction. In other words, in order to become a party democrat, Lenin did not have to temporarily suspend his revolutionary Marxism and begin implementing reformist policies. On the contrary, he devised a strategy for organising committee work that satisfied both *Iskra*'s factional interests and the principles Lenin articulated at Belostock, the main phases of which we shall now describe. For all the minor faults in its execution, this strategy provides obvious proofs, comment on which is largely superfluous, as to the democratic and constitutional nature of Lenin's methods of party organisation, proofs that undermine any doubts which may arise concerning his good faith during the summer of 1902.

iii) The Reconstitution of the Organising Committee and its Work

Two factors advantageous to *Iskra* appear to have conspired to precipitate a new attempt at forming the organising committee late in the summer of 1902. The first of these appears to have been Radchenko's success in St Petersburg, as a result of which another *Iskra* agent active in the city, one VP Krasnukha, went abroad to meet Lenin for discussion on work towards the congress.⁴⁹³ By this stage, a social-democratic organisation active in several small towns in the upper Volga region, the Northern Union, had also been won to *Iskra* and its representative, VA Noskov also appeared in London, apparently on the same mission.⁴⁹⁴ A meeting of these took place on 15th August with Lenin and the *Iskra* agent Krasikov, dedicated to discussing how to relaunch the organising committee.⁴⁹⁵ The second factor which counted in *Iskra*'s favour was news from the south that, although the leadership of the Southern Union had been completely dismantled as a result of the police action at Belostock, its newspaper, *Iuzhnii Rabochii* intended to resume publication, and that the latter now considered itself an adherent of *Iskra* principles.⁴⁹⁶ This ideological change cannot be taken entirely seriously, and was probably motivated by the fact that, in the wake of the raids, the papers' editors had become completely isolated from the social-democratic movement, and wanted the help of the *Iskra* organisation to re-establish

⁴⁹³ *Leninskii Sbornik* viii 272-4; NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 81

⁴⁹⁴ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 272; NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 81

⁴⁹⁵ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 272

⁴⁹⁶ *Iuzhnii Rabochii* 10 (Sep 1902) 18; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 274-5[n6]

contacts with activists in the different southern towns.⁴⁹⁷ Despite this, *Iskra* seemed willing to co-operate with the group.⁴⁹⁸ The result was a tactically much more considered attempt to re-establish the organising committee in accordance with Belostock principles, yet without undermining *Iskra*'s own position.

The first step was to establish a purely *Iskra* core made up of representatives of St Petersburg, the Northern Union and the Russian *Iskra* organisation.⁴⁹⁹ This would begin work as a provisional group, seeking to expand the influence of *Iskra* whilst at the same time sounding out and appointing agents for the real organising committee in different areas of the country. In relation to the southern region, it was decided to investigate *Iuzhnii Rabochii* more closely by sending *Iskra* agents to meet them and, providing they were found to be of sufficient standard, to co-opt them onto the organising committee in an official capacity.⁵⁰⁰ Having obtained this unequal union of two organisations, the Bund would then be approached and invited to send its representative. Then, one representative from each of the three main organisations - the Bund, *Iskra* and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* - plus the St Petersburg committee, which was represented by Krasnukha, would together vote additional personnel on to the committee and thereafter direct the committee's policy.⁵⁰¹ Thus it seems clear that the remaining members would provide practical services to the committee but would not have the 'full rights' of these four central individuals. An approach to the emigre organisations who had participated in the Belostock meeting, such as the Foreign Committee of the Bund, the Union Abroad and the revolutionary League would be delayed further still, the aim being to create a separate 'emigre department' of the

⁴⁹⁷ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 274-5 [n6]

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, viii 273, 277-8; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 227-9

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, viii 272: «На основании постановлений весенней конференции, Ваня + организация Искры + Семён Семёнович устраивают организационный комитет для подготовки общепартийного съезда. ...»

⁵⁰⁰ «Организационный Комитет имеет право кооптации»; «... Потом в этот комитет должны будут войти представители от Бори и от юга; но это потом, пока-же Организационный Комитет считается ещё неконституировавшимся... » [*Ibid.*, viii 272]

⁵⁰¹ «Когда можно будет надеяться, что южанин будет вполне свой человек, тогда он будет принят в Организационный Комитет и тогда уже Организационный Комитет конституируется и пригласит бундиста.» [*Ibid.*, viii 273]; PB Axelrod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma* 80 [n3]; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 118

organising committee to incorporate these groups.⁵⁰² The aim of this was to guarantee a Russian section of the organising committee utterly dominated by *Iskra* and its co-thinkers in the south, whilst the overseas section would be dominated by the anti-*Iskra* groups who had conceived of the Belostock meeting. Having satisfied the Belostock principles in this manner, the final move would be to formally subordinate the émigrés to the Russians, and to confine the former to work among the emigration in accordance with instructions received from Russia.⁵⁰³ Ostensibly, the most important part of this, given the eventual decision to hold the congress abroad, appears to have been devoted to finding a venue and arranging the accommodation of delegates and to secure their safe passage over the border. However, it is clear Lenin intended to keep this function firmly in the hands of *Iskra* alone, owing to their superior experience in matters related to smuggling activists over the Russian frontier, though to obtain this outcome it was now necessary to have the support of the Bund and *Iuzhnii Rabochii*.⁵⁰⁴

The result of this plan was a meeting in Pskov in November, to which representatives of Russian *Iskra*, *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and the Bund were invited.⁵⁰⁵ The Bund, however, did not attend owing to an accidental breakdown in communication. It seems that Krasikov delivered an invitation to a local branch of the Jewish organisation, but that this was either ignored or not forwarded to its leadership.⁵⁰⁶ The result was that the existence of the organising committee was declared without the presence of the Bund, a procedure that caused Lenin to query the actions of Krasikov, at this stage the main travelling *Iskra* agent, as it did not coincide with the agreed

⁵⁰² VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 289; xxxiv 139-40

⁵⁰³ Ibid., xxxiv 118, 137-8

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., xxxiv 118: 'Be stricter with the Bund! Be stricter, too, in writing to the Bund and *Rabochee Delo* abroad, reducing their function to such a minimum that in any case it cannot be of importance. You can entrust technical arrangements of the Congress to special delegates from you or to your special agents; don't hand over this matter to anyone and don't forget that the people abroad are weak in secrecy techniques.'

⁵⁰⁵ PB Axelrod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma*, 80 [n3]; NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 87; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 29

⁵⁰⁶ *Iskra* 33 (Feb 1, 1903) 7

plan.⁵⁰⁷ The result was that at first the committee was rather lopsided, and appeared to have been constituted somewhat in violation of the Belostock terms, a compromise apparently justified by those present at the Pskov meeting on the grounds that further delays were unacceptable.⁵⁰⁸ Lenin's concern on this point was apposite, as it gave the Bund the opportunity to protest that it was being excluded, even though the organising committee's public statement clearly referred to the Bund's wished for participation.⁵⁰⁹ Indeed, the public exchange of views on this matter did not raise the credibility of the organising committee, even though the Bund ultimately consented to send a representative and acknowledged that the organising committee was correctly constituted.⁵¹⁰ Thus, even if its work was disrupted towards the end of 1902 by further arrests, by January the Russian section of the organising committee was in a position to carry out its work having been constituted largely in accordance with the Belostock formula.

One remaining problem was that of the émigré department. It seems that Lenin had planned to approach both the Foreign Committee of the Bund and the Union for some form of co-operation in organising the congress, in a letter stressing the legal basis of the group in the Belostock conference.⁵¹¹ However, it also appears that he had a change of heart on this point, possibly having heard of the problem with the Bund, as a result of which he did not carry through this part of his plan. As has already been noted, the foreign committee would have probably been dominated by the Economists and, possibly recalling his mistake the previous May, Lenin apparently decided to do nothing and to allow the Economists to exercise their right to create such a body on their own initiative. The result of this rather conscious passivity was that nothing was done about the foreign section until February, when a representative of the Union

⁵⁰⁷ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 308f; xxxiv 118

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, xxxiv 118

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vi 308f: 'The Bund was also invited to send a representative to the Organising Committee, but for reasons unknown to us, the Bund did not respond to this invitation. We hope that the reasons are purely accidental, and that the Bund will not delay sending its representative'; *Poslednie Izvestiia* 106 (Feb 3/Jan 21, 1903) 1

⁵¹⁰ *Iskra* 33 (Feb 1, 1903), 4, 7; *Iskra* 34 (Feb 15, 1903), 2, 6; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 30

⁵¹¹ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 289

Abroad finally wrote to Lenin about this question, perhaps having read the announcement of the organising committee in *Iskra*.⁵¹² Lenin replied by referring them to the Russian 'section' of the committee who were of course in no hurry to reply, given its anti-Economist majority and a certain amount of prompting from the *Iskra* leader. Consequently, the Union Abroad and the other émigré organisations played no actual role in the work of congress organisation.⁵¹³ Whilst this policy was formally incorrect, this breach of the Belostock agreement cannot be regarded as particularly important, and it in fact represented something of a deviation in the direction of common sense. This is partially because following Belostock, both *Rabochee Delo* and its *Listok* ceased to appear, leading to the question of whether the Union Abroad could still be considered an active social-democratic group capable of carrying out organising work, especially when we consider the two failures at congress organisation for which the Union had been partially responsible. Not only this, a very similar impression is obtained when we study the Plekhanovite League Abroad, which reveals a picture of absolute lethargy during this period and which appeared to have no contact whatsoever with Russian life, with the exception of its group in Berlin.⁵¹⁴ As for the Foreign Committee of the Bund it seems that, like the émigré Plekhanovites, they were prepared to submit to the judgement of their Russian colleagues, with the effect that only one inactive émigré group, the Union Abroad, protested its exclusion from the organising committee.⁵¹⁵ Finally, it is necessary to consider the fact that the organising work in the emigration ultimately carried out by a single individual, which naturally poses the question of whether a separate section of the organising committee was really necessary.⁵¹⁶

The real work of the organising committee was broadly dictated by Lenin's letter to the Belostock meeting, though there were clearly certain modifications determined by both circumstance and the fact that Lenin did not at any stage exert

⁵¹² Ibid., xxxiv 139

⁵¹³ Ibid., xxxiv 139-40

⁵¹⁴ IG Smidovich *Protokoly 5-ogo ocherednogo s"ezda zagranichnoi ligi revoliutsionnoi russkoi sotsial-demokratii*, ed. I Lesenko & F Dan, (Geneva: League of Revolutionary Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, 1904) 29-31

⁵¹⁵ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 30

⁵¹⁶ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 94

direct control over it. The question of the party programme had already been resolved by this stage with the appearance of the Plekhanov-Lenin draft in *Iskra* the previous April.⁵¹⁷ As a result, critical articles on it were published by Riazanov, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, whose criticism of the agrarian section was published in *Iskra* itself, the *Iskra* supporter P.P. Maslov and the Polish Socialist Party, even if the original project of a 'programme commission' had been abandoned.⁵¹⁸ Thus, the draft programme was given significant publicity prior to its approval or rejection by congress, permitting an informed debate on it throughout the RSDLP. The organising committee also took on the responsibilities normally carried out by the central committee, in so far as it published numerous leaflets on questions of national importance.⁵¹⁹ However the greater part of its work was given over to resolving the controversial question of which organisations had the right to attend the congress. Lenin had originally suggested a very complete scheme of representation, involving individual circles in each local movement, but this was ultimately passed over in favour of the inclusion of only the largest committees, a modification which received Lenin's approval after it had been published, a fact indicating, incidentally, that the scheme was not his work.⁵²⁰ The reason for this change appears to have been the fear of giving an excessive voice to groups without real influence in the working class, in a situation where it was hard to measure the relative effectiveness of each local group according to a common scale.⁵²¹ This was of course in a context in which there was no agreed definition of a party member and his or her duties, with the effect that different groups could not be awarded votes in direct proportion to their membership size.

Consequently, the organisers were faced with devising a fair way of apportioning votes between such diverse organisations as: an illegal trade union of hundreds of members; a fortnightly newspaper edited by six people but read by thousands, whilst receiving articles from all over the country; a courier service which connected twenty local groups yet which was made up of no more than a few dozen highly experienced individuals; and several small groups of social-democrats who read books in secret

⁵¹⁷ *Iskra* 21 (Apr. 15, 1902) 1-2

⁵¹⁸ *Iskra* 25 (Oct 1, 1902) 3-4; N Riazanov, *Proekt programma 'Iskry': zadachy russkikh sotsial-demokratov*, (Geneva: Borba, 1903); VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 438-63

⁵¹⁹ *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 59 (1933) 8-39

⁵²⁰ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 148-9; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 493-500

⁵²¹ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 496-7 [article 2]

and issued a leaflet in one town perhaps once every six months. In a more mature party, or in a more democratic society, solutions might well have been found to these difficulties. Indeed, the organisers felt obliged to note that, were Russia a democracy, each local organisation could have been apportioned votes at the congress in proportion to the votes it had received in public elections.⁵²² However, in the absence of such established methods of deciding the matter, and lack of general agreement as to the nature of the party, they decided that most workable solution was to give each organisation that made a significant contribution to the social-democratic movement the same share of influence whilst denying representation to those who did not, whilst clearly defining and seeking general consent for the minimum standards required. One can of course debate the pros and cons of this procedure in democratic terms, but there is nothing to suggest that it was a calculated attempt to exclude any particular faction or point of view.

Because of these considerations, work on the scheme of representation took on a somewhat top-down approach, though this did not mean it lacked democratic validity. In the circular announcing its existence, the organising committee stated:

It is self-evident that the Organising Committee, which has arisen on the initiative of several organisations, will be bound by obligatory relations only with those organisations that have already authorised it or that will authorise it to act for them. Its relation to all other committees and groups is that of a separate organisation, which offers its services to them.⁵²³

Thus it openly acknowledges its provisional, unofficial character, an attitude contrasting starkly with the pretensions of the Belostock meeting. Not only that, in accordance with this modest self-definition, the organising committee set itself the task of acquiring a mandate to act in the name of the RSDLP, in a procedure which must surely have undermined any lingering doubts in relation to the committee's composition. This it did by drawing up a list of seventeen local committees which it

⁵²² Ibid., 496 (article 2]: 'The fairest procedure would, of course, be to invite all the organisations to the congress, and allocate votes among them in accordance with the number of electors each represented. But since, in the Russia of the autocracy, there can be no question of electors, the number of electors has to be replaced by a far less definite concept, namely an organisations sphere of influence.'

⁵²³ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 309

considered to be the most prominent and by seeking declarations of support from them for the organising committee's work.⁵²⁴ These seventeen did not include the Bund, the St Petersburg Committee, *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and the Northern Union, all of whom at this stage had representatives on the organising committee itself, but the list does appear to have represented a majority of the actually existing local organisations, even before their greater size and influence was taken into consideration.⁵²⁵ Agents of the organising committee made personal visits to each of these, after which their declarations of support were published in *Iskra*.⁵²⁶ This process seems to have produced a fierce struggle in several areas between the Economists and the *Iskra* supporters, on the grounds that the former did not actually have a representative on the organising committee, despite having a strong oppositional presence in the *Iskra*-led movements in Kiev and St Petersburg, and possibly in other areas too.⁵²⁷ However, local *Iskra* supporters seem to have fought off this challenge in nearly every case, with the effect that all but one local group gave permission for the organising committee to organise a party congress.⁵²⁸ Despite this unanimity, the fact that there were such a conflicts as the ones in Kiev and St Petersburg provides strong evidence that the seventeen were not simply hand-picked for their pro-*Iskra* political allegiance, and considered together they do seem to include most of the major industrial centres and regions of European Russia and the Caucasus.⁵²⁹ The failure of the Economists to disrupt the organising committee's work further seems to have been based more on the fact that they lacked an all-Russian, or even a regional apparatus linking its supporters in different towns, a lack which also explains the failure of the organising committee to accept an Economist into its midst.

⁵²⁴ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 30-1

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32: here it appears that there were thirty-two Russian committees making up the RSDLP, including those involved in the organising committee, but not including the Russian *Iskra* organisation, and with the Bund counting as just one committee, for reasons we shall explain below.

⁵²⁶ *Iskra* 34 (Feb 15, 1903) 6

⁵²⁷ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 301-2; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxvi 116-7, 126-8, 131-2, 135

⁵²⁸ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 31

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31: i.e. St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, the Don region, the Upper Volga industrial region, the Donbass, Tiflis, Baku, Tula, Saratov, Bryansk, Odessa, Nikolayev and Voronezh. Also consulted was the Siberian Union, which apparently had a weak base in several towns.

Having obtained this vote of confidence, the next step was to draft rules of representation defining who could and could not attend the congress, the aim being to achieve a sufficiently inclusive meeting, without permitting the over-representation of small groups which had limited contact with the labour movement.⁵³⁰ Accordingly, only organisations active among large populations of workers were allowed to send delegates. They also had to prove that they had been in existence for at least one year and that they had consistently carried out 'agitational, propagandist or organisational work among the working-class masses'.⁵³¹ On the basis of these requirements, the organising committee produced a whole series of regulations detailing the rights and obligations of organisations to be represented at the congress.⁵³² It is not essential to our argument that we examine the provisions of these rules in detail beyond noting that, as well as providing for the participation of the most solid local organisations, all the main émigré organisations were explicitly granted the right to attend congress with equal voting rights.⁵³³ More important is the fact that these provisions were also circulated to all known local social-democratic organisations, all of whom were invited to submit amendments. This said, only the sixteen 'most influential' had the right to vote on these, along with the right to approve the document as a whole, which suggested an attempt to balance concerns for inclusiveness with an arrangement that ensured the majority view did actually prevail.⁵³⁴ The result was a list of amendments proposed by six 'major' and two 'minor' committees, none of which convinced a majority of the sixteen largest organisations.⁵³⁵ On this basis, the representation scheme was declared to be valid in the eyes of the party, and the organisers began to draw up a list of local organisations entitled to attend the congress.

The organising committee's initial estimate was that fourteen local organisations fulfilled the requirements of its rules: eighteen were thus denied representation at the congress.⁵³⁶ At first glance, this can seem like poor basis on

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 493-500

⁵³¹ Ibid., 493 [article 2]

⁵³² Ibid., 493-5

⁵³³ Ibid., 493 [article 4]

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 31-2

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 32

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 32

which to hold a supposedly representative meeting, but closer examination suggests that a lot of the groups excluded were still in the earliest stages of their formation, had ambiguous attitudes towards the RSDLP, or had demonstrated little practical initiative. This impression is obtained from the appeals process which the organising committee devised in order to deal with complaints on this score.⁵³⁷ Among those that were accepted we find the Association of Mining and Metallurgical Workers from the Donbass region, and the Crimean Union. The former's appeal was accepted on the grounds that, though small, its area of work was strategic for the RSDLP as a whole, and that 'despite exceptionally difficult circumstances ... it has formed firm ties with all the largest centres in the area, and since the beginning of 1903 has even carried on vigorous agitation, issuing a number of proclamations'.⁵³⁸ In the same spirit, the Crimean Union, by demonstrating activity in five separate towns was accepted. Those that were rejected included the Odessa organisation *Rabochaia Volia* on the grounds that

it was an extremely small organisation which, though it had indeed been formed prior to May 1 last year, carried out hardly any activity prior to autumn of last year [i.e. 1902 - RM]. Since then, the 'activity' of the *Rabochaia Volia* group has been known to the Odessa committee only in the form of three or four proclamations, distributed in very small numbers. As regards the other organisations working in neighbouring towns, neither the Nikolayev nor the Kishinev Committee knew anything at all about *Rabochaia Volia*, apart from the fact that they had at some point separated off from the Odessa committee.⁵³⁹

Even given the possibility of politically motivated score-settling through this kind of testimony, it seems that there is a fair principle at work here. Two organisations apparently capable of activity in several towns are admitted, whereas as one, largely unknown group, operating in a town where a larger, better-known group already exists, is excluded. Whilst the latter might seem tough on minority opinions, it seems the only practical alternative in cases such as Odessa was to have given one vote to each side, which is hardly fair if one of these sides represented a massive majority and the other an insignificant minority of local activists. On the other hand,

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 32-4, 487, 501-2

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 501

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 33

where two more or less equally developed factions existed in the same town, as was the case with St Petersburg, places at congress were given to both sides, with the effect that St Petersburg had an Economist and an *Iskra* delegate.⁵⁴⁰ It is perhaps also worth noting in this connection that the Odessa *Rabochaia Volia* group does not appear to have been an Economist group: if, as appears likely, it was connected with the 'Odessa Group of Revolutionary Social-Democrats' present at the First Congress of the Southern Union, it would seem that its political colouration was probably a vulgarised form of Plekhanovism.⁵⁴¹

Apart from these factors, it is important to note that this same appeals process resulted in the admission of five extra Russian groups to the congress, with the effect that out of thirty-four local groups in total, including the likes of *Rabochaia Volia*, nineteen well-established and active organisations were granted equal representation rights: two votes at the congress.⁵⁴² The figure of two was apparently chosen to allow for the possibility of both an Economist and a revolutionary delegate should both trends have a significant presence in any particular town though in the end this provision only had an effect on St Petersburg.⁵⁴³ This said, it is worth emphasising that, when the organising committee made this decision, there was simply no evidence that more than a small number of local committees supported *Iskra*, a situation which meant that the two delegate rule was not without significance. In fact, by the end of

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 34

⁵⁴¹ OA Ermanskii, *Otchet S'ezda iuzhnikh komitetov*, 5-7; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 33

⁵⁴² *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 34, 493 [article 9] As an exception to this rule, the Central Committee of the Bund was given three votes. We will deal with the problems that produced this anomaly in the next section. The local groups finally granted representation were the seventeen originally consulted with the exceptions of Briansk and Voronezh, plus the St Petersburg Workers Organisation, the Crimean Association, the Mining and Metallurgical Union, and the Ufa committee [Ibid., 34]

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 498 [articles 9, 10 & 11]: 'The OC considered that each organisation should be given two votes at the congress - two rather than one - because: 1) this makes it possible to represent the views of the majority and the minority in an organisation, and 2) if there are two organisations in one town, this enables each of them to be allotted one vote at congress, whereas if every organisation were to be given one vote it would be unfair to give two votes to a town where there were two organisations.' Clearly this is an adaptation to the fact that within the Russian social-democracy there were two and not a greater number of basic political trends: the Economists and the revolutionary Marxists.

February 1902 a total of eight local organisations appear to have declared for *Iskra* among whom we find Kazan, which was not entitled to representation, *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and the *Iuzhnii Rabochii* affiliated Kharkov committee.⁵⁴⁴ St Petersburg had been the first to publicly state its *Iskra* sympathies, a statement which led to a split, both sides of which were ultimately granted congress rights.⁵⁴⁵ In Kiev, the Economists carried out a sort of *coup d'etat* in the committee after it declared for *Iskra*. All of this points to the fact that, having established a fair and reasonable method of deciding how the party should be represented at its congress, a pre-congress campaign involving all factions would then begin with the aim of securing the election of sympathetic delegates.⁵⁴⁶ That is to say, for all Lenin's games with the Bund and the Union Abroad in and around the organising committee itself, the end result of this process was a constitutional order inside the RSDLP on the basis of which a free contest between reformist and revolutionary for power and influence could take place. Significantly, this order appears to have been the brainchild not of the supposedly democratic reformists but of *Iskra* and of Lenin in particular. From the evidence we have presented in this section, there can be no serious doubt of this fact: its entire origins lie in the letter Lenin wrote to the Belostock conference, even if his original plan was modified somewhat to take account of changing circumstances.

Consequently, all that remains to be explained is how it came to pass that *Iskra* won this free contest so decisively, to the extent that the Economists were only able to send just one delegate from a Russian local organisation to the congress, *Iuzhnii Rabochii* two, the Bund three, whilst *Iskra* captured twenty seven, the remainder being independents.⁵⁴⁷ Though the details remain obscure, the general answer to this question appears to lie in the far superior organisation of the *Iskra* faction, in so far as its Russian network of agents were able to work tirelessly to ensure that the committees elected sympathetic delegates. In addition, the authority of *Iskra* newspaper must have been utterly unrivalled by this stage, in so far as its eight

⁵⁴⁴ *Iskra* 24 (Sep. 15, 1902) 5-6; *Iskra* 26 (Oct. 15, 1902) 7; *Iskra* 27 (Nov. 1, 1902) 6; *Iskra* 28 (Nov. 15, 1902) 6; *Iskra* 30 (Dec 15, 1902) 6; *Iskra* 35 (Mar 1, 1903) 8

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 (Nov.1, 1902) 6; *Iskra* 28 (Nov. 15, 1902) 6

⁵⁴⁶ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 300-4

⁵⁴⁷ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 19 These figures exclude the 'émigré' votes, which Lenin includes in his calculations here.

fortnightly pages contained reports from every corner of Russia on such diverse themes as strikes, student and peasant rebellions, the gentry politics of the *zemstva*, police violence and torture, and news of the arrests, sentences and conditions of arrested revolutionaries and oppositionists, regardless of their faction. However, its authority was not only the result of this extensive coverage: the newspaper opened its columns to critical points of view, including replies to its articles from the Bund, *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, the St Petersburg Economists and any other group that wished to send material.⁵⁴⁸ By contrast, both main Economist publications, *Rabochee Delo* and *Rabochaia Mysl'*, had folded by this stage and there is no evidence of any co-ordinated campaign by them to win the committees to their side following the finalisation of the congress arrangements. If their supporters fought *Iskra* in some big cities, they never really branched out into the provinces, a fact which, far more effectively than the myth about the Second Congress being a 'stitch-up', explains their weak representation at the event.

iv) *The Jewish Bund*

A common objection to the conclusion just drawn is that the Bund, in being granted three votes at the congress as an exception to the rule of two for each organisation, was still absurdly under-represented.⁵⁴⁹ By the end of 1904 one witness sympathetic to this organisation claimed it had functioning organisations in fourteen separate industrial towns and claimed that as many as seventy thousand workers participated in its activity.⁵⁵⁰ On this basis, it might seem that a delegation carrying anything up to twenty eight votes might have been appropriate, depending on the size and solidity of these local branches. Moreover, it can seem that the majority on the

⁵⁴⁸ *Iskra* 8 (Sep. 10, 1901) 6; *Iskra* 25 (Oct. 1, 1902) 3-4; *Iskra* 30 (Dec. 15, 1902) 6; *Iskra* 36 (Mar. 15, 1903) 7-8

⁵⁴⁹ BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 232; JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 110; L Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* 48; RD Warth *Lenin*, 50-1; R Service, *Lenin, A Political Life*, i 101; R Service, *Lenin: A Biography* 153. It is noteworthy that Service repeatedly asserts the false view that the Bund *protested* their supposed under-representation at the Second Congress. The minutes show that this was clearly not the case [*Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 28-36]

⁵⁵⁰ VP Akimov, 'A Short History of the Russian Social-Democratic Movement', 222

organising committee, in so far as it stipulated the size of the Bund's delegation in its draft 'rules of representation' and then sought approval of this draft from sixteen organizations, among which the Bund was not included, actually excluded the Jewish organisation from the democratic processes it had created, possibly in the face of resistance from the Bund representative on this committee.⁵⁵¹ There is a certain one-sided truth to this allegation, not to mention circumstantial evidence to support it in the form of the Bund's failure to attend the Pskov meeting. However, to appreciate the whole picture, it is necessary to go back a little in history in order to trace the changing relations between the Bund and the RSDLP as a whole, in the light of which it seems the Bund did not suffer discrimination. According to the decision of the 1898 congress:

The organisations of the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, the groups of *Rabochaia Gazeta* and the General Jewish Workers' Union in Russia and Poland are merged into a single organisation called the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and the General Jewish Workers' Union in Russia and Poland enters the party as an autonomous organisation, independent only in questions especially concerning the Jewish proletariat.⁵⁵²

This formulation expressed the fact that the RSDLP was a centralised party, with the effect that four Unions of Struggle, *Rabochaia Gazeta* and the Bund were 'merged' into just one organisation with common political aims, common funds and a common leadership. This leadership had the authority to give any of these formerly independent organisations instructions. At the same time, there were clearly limits to this centralisation. According to the above-mentioned resolution, the Bund retained its identity even though it was now part of the RSDLP. It could act independently in matters relating to Jewish religion or culture, matters concerning which non-Jews would probably be fairly ignorant. For example, this provision would appear to grant Jewish RSDLP members the right to produce social-democratic literature in Yiddish, whilst at the same time developing policies in relation to the synagogue, the religious schools, community leaders and the like. However, in more general questions of a type which affected all nationalities equally, the Jewish Bund was indistinguishable from the rest of the party. In other words it accepted the *Manifesto*, the general

⁵⁵¹ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 31-2, 493 [article 9n]

⁵⁵² R Taylor & N Harding, *Key Documents*, 225 [paragraph 1]

instructions of the party leadership, it donated funds to the central bodies, it distributed *Rabochaia Gazeta*, and all other social-democratic literature and its members freely co-operated with members of the ex-Unions of Struggle wherever this was necessary.⁵⁵³ Connected to this, a second limit on centralisation was recognised:

Local committees carry out the instructions of the Central Committee in that form which they find most fitting in relation to local conditions. In exceptional circumstances local committees are granted the right to refuse to carry out the demands of the central committee, having made the latter aware of its reasons for refusal. In all other instances, local committees act entirely independently, guided only by the programme of the party.⁵⁵⁴

Against the assertions of maximum political unity between the six founding organisations, there is a common-sense concession to the fact that conditions in different areas of the country are not identical. Consequently, the resolution acknowledges that a certain flexibility is required when it come to implementing the common policy of the party. It is recognised that the central committee can make mistakes and that local branches of the RSDLP can challenge its wisdom, whilst at the same time freely acting on their own initiative, developing the work of the RSDLP in areas where the central committee has not given its opinion. This provision in the original RSDLP constitution is significant because it gives the strong impression that the apparent privilege of ‘autonomy’ granted to the Bund was in fact a right granted to all component organisations of the RSDLP. Consequently, even though it has a special name and produces literature in a unique language, the Bund does in fact appear to be just another local organisation of the RSDLP, with the same rights and responsibilities as those in Moscow, St Petersburg, Ekaterinoslav and Kiev, even though it was active in several towns, as opposed to just one big city.

As was noted previously, the 1900 congress plan involved an attempt to overthrow the relations established in 1898 and to replace them with a federalist constitution made up of several regional centres. Each of these gathered together social-democratic groups in a number of small towns, provided them with a local newspaper, organised the provision of literature and represented them at the RSDLP

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 225 [paragraphs 3a, 6a&b, 7, 8n]

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 225 [paragraph 7]

congress. The present study has also suggested that this new draft constitution was based on the actual character of the Bund, observing that the Bund was probably not the source of this revision and that it most likely came from the group around *Iuzhni Rabochii*. Consequently, one significant implication of the 1900 congress was that it converted the Jewish Bund from an *anomaly* inside the RSDLP into its basic template. In other words, rather than being a party taking as its starting point social-democratic movements based in the big-city factory proletariat, whilst accepting into its ranks organisations uniting the labour movement of several small towns, organisations which generally combined factory workers with home-workers, miners and the like, the party was to be based in the latter. If one of the main reasons for this would appear to have been the weak state of the St Petersburg and Moscow movements during this period, its most important consequence was the emergence of an increasingly vocal Jewish separatism articulated by the Bund which, unlike the RSDLP, had managed to retain its structures in tact during the previous two years. This was expressed in the view that the RSDLP should be reconstituted as a federation of social-democratic parties, each of which was based in a definite national group inhabiting the Russian empire. This view was registered at the Fourth Congress of the Bund, which was held in April 1901:

Отношение Бунда к Росс[ийской] С[оциал]-Д[емократической] Раб[очей] Партии. Представляя себе Российскую С[оциал]-Д[емократическую] Р[абочую] П[артию] как федеративное соединение социалдемокр. партий всех нации, населяющих российское государство, съезд постановил, чтобы Бунд, как представитель еврейск[ого]. пролетариата, вступил в неё, как федеративная часть и поручает Центральному Комитету провести это решение в жизнь.⁵⁵⁵

Politically, this resolution represented a clean break with the ideas of 1898 in so far as the Bund now characterised itself as the 'representative of the Jewish proletariat' *within* the RSDLP and not, as at least one critic of their position observed, the representative of a closely united multi-racial RSDLP among the Jewish

⁵⁵⁵ *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sep. 1901) 125 [resolution 15]: 'The relationship of the Bund to the RSDLP: considering the RSDLP to be a united federation of social-democratic parties of all nations living with the Russian state, congress declares that the Bund, as the representative of the Jewish proletariat, enters it as a federative part, and instructs the Central Committee to bring this to life.'

proletariat.⁵⁵⁶ In other words, it declared that there were some differences of interest between Jewish and non-Jewish workers and that workers from different nationalities generally had separate and to some degree rival interests. This naturally represented a challenge to the internationalist outlook of Marxism which declared that 'the working class has no nation', and that the common interests of workers of all nations consisted in putting an end to the capitalist system. For this task, national differences in the labour movement had to be consciously subordinated to the common imperative of fighting the capitalist class. This meant that social-democratic workers, regardless of nationality, religion or any other social identifier, would co-operate in common organizations, the limits of which were determined only by state boundaries, and only then because the workers' movement would be subject to different legal conditions in each state. Despite the legally necessary existence of separate workers' parties in separate states, they should all co-operate in the closest possible manner through the International.

It is not necessary to go too deeply into the rights and wrongs of this argument at this stage. The main points are that the Bund brought this federalist thinking to the organising committee; that its point of view on these matters set it against *Iskra* and *Iuzhnii Rabochii*; and that in this conflict, the Bund both argued and acted in a manner rather contrary to its interests. This is for the following reasons. In an attempt to put the case that the congress should be made up of representatives from the type of regional and national blocs envisaged in the 1900 draft RSDLP constitution, the Bund put forward the unconvincing argument that the RSDLP no longer existed, and need to be refounded:

Раз партии фактически не существуют, то предстоящий съезд должен носить характер учредительного, а потому право участия в нем должно принадлежать всем существующим в России социалдемократическим организациям, как русской, так и всех других национальностей, помимо различных русских социалдемократических комитетов и Бунда, необходимо, чтобы на съезде имели свои представительства социалдемократические организации поляков, литовцев, латышей и т.д. Только при соблюдении этого условия возможно, по нашему мнению создание "одной централизованной, дисциплинированной армии"

⁵⁵⁶ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 87-8

- Российской Социалдемократической Рабочей Партии.⁵⁵⁷

This view of the Second Congress being at the same time a 'founding' congress of the party has, unfortunately, been echoed by more than one historian despite its elementary illogicality. This view is illogical because the idea of a new 'founding' (*uchreditelny*) congress was not, for example, raised during the congress attempt of 1900, at which the organisers more than once acknowledged the decisions of the previous congress, not least through their intention to relaunch *Rabochaia Gazeta*.⁵⁵⁸ The same can be said of the Belostock meeting, at which the Bund backed a resolution defining the status of the event in the following terms:

Ввиду отсутствия центральной партийной организации, которая могла бы удовлетворительно подготовить в технико-конспиративном отношении *II съезд* партии, а также ввиду того что на собрании не было достаточно организаций и вопросы не были всеми организациями в достаточной степени разработаны, собрание объявляет себя предварительной конференцией, имеющей целью подготовить в ближайшем будущем созыв такого съезда, положить начало фактическому объединению партии и решить неотложные практические задачи (*our italics*).⁵⁵⁹

Clearly the Bund was happy to acknowledge the validity of the First Congress

⁵⁵⁷ *Poslednie Izvestiia* 106 (Feb 3/Jan21 1903) 1: 'Seeing as the party does not in fact exist, the proposed congress should take on the character of a founding congress, and thus the right of participation should belong to all social-democratic organisations existing in Russia, be they Russian or of any other nationality. Apart from different Russian social-democratic committees and the Bund, it is necessary that the Polish, Lithuanians and Lettish etc social-democratic organisations have representation. Only though the observance of this condition is the creation of 'one centralised, disciplined army' - the Russian Social-Democratic Labour party - possible, in our opinion.'

⁵⁵⁸ AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-democraticeskoe dvizhenie*, i 319 [articles 2& 3]: «Принимая во внимание что: 1) жизнь только подтверждает правильность основных взглядов предыдущего съезда....»; «Вполне разделяя общие воззрения предыдущего съезда ... »

⁵⁵⁹ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh*, 41: 'In view of the absence of a central party organisation, which could sufficiently well prepare the Second Congress of the party from a technical-conspiratorial point of view, and also in view of the fact that at the meeting not enough organisations were represented and the questions for discussion were not sufficiently well worked out by these organisations, the meeting declares itself a preliminary conference, with the aim of preparing in the nearest future a congress that can lay the basis for the actual unity of the party and determine our immediate practical tasks.'

at Belostock to the extent that it declared the meeting 'a preparatory conference, having as a goal the preparation of such a congress in the nearest future': the congress in question was clearly the *Second* Congress of the RSDLP. We are thus led to the unusual conclusion that in the view of the Bund, the RSDLP 'stopped existing' some time between March and December 1902. Clearly this is nonsense: if it stopped existing at any point then it was in March 1898, immediately after its First Congress and the smashing of its newspaper and central committee. For two whole years after this point it seems the Bund acknowledged the RSDLP only to then start arguing that it was non-existent in an unconvincing attempt to promote its federal preferences. The result was a firm rejection of its views by *Iskra* and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* who were merely being consistent in their assertion that the RSDLP actually existed. In this way the Bund simply handed these factions the political initiative, which they used to advocate a more centralised scheme of representation to the party congress. Worse, the nature of this scheme seems to have completely confused the Bund, causing its representatives to make an extremely poor tactical choice.

The majority on the organising committee appear to have stood for the principle that any national organisation was eligible to send representatives the congress provided they wished to be considered as part of the Russian party and not the social-democracy of some other country.⁵⁶⁰ Accordingly, the Bund and the Caucasian Union were recognised as part of the RSDLP, essentially at these organisations' own request. By contrast, the Polish and Lithuanian social-democrats were invited to declare for the RSDLP but in the end did not accept.⁵⁶¹ Having thus obtained the support of three distinct national blocs, the organising committee majority then introduced into its scheme of representation measures designed to undermine the possibility of federal relations obtaining between the Russians, the Caucasians and the Jews. This took the form of the following paragraph:

Organisations which are grouped in associations do not have the right to independent

⁵⁶⁰ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 152; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 493 [paragraph 1] 49-50

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 504-7

representation.⁵⁶²

As befits a centralised scheme of representation, this law was applied uniformly to all three national groups, but it gave rather different results in each case. In general it meant that local organisations belonging to larger networks would lose their rights to direct representation at the congress if they were part of a larger union. In other words, where organisations existed that were made up of several smaller subgroups united under a common leadership, only the 'headquarters' would be entitled to representation. In the Russian zone, this had the effect of allowing social-democratic groups in small towns to be represented at the congress, albeit indirectly. For example, the Crimean Union, which we spoke about in relation to the appeals process, had a presence in five different towns. Together these were granted two votes, presumably on the grounds that these towns *together* made up a 'locality with a more or less significant working class population', proof of residence in which was an essential criterion for organisations aiming to earn representation at congress.⁵⁶³ Exactly the same situation appears to have applied to the Northern Union, which had a presence in three towns,⁵⁶⁴ the Siberian Union and the Mining and Metalworkers' Union.⁵⁶⁵ If all these organisations had asked their local branches to be considered separately, they would almost certainly have been declined representation at the congress.

However, the case of the Caucasus was somewhat different in that the Caucasian Union had a base in three large cities: Tiflis, Batum and Baku.⁵⁶⁶ The regulation about regional and national networks actually gave them the incentive to split into three distinct local organisations, each of which would then probably gain admittance to the congress in its own right. This is in fact exactly what happened, with the effect that the number of delegates to the congress coming from the Caucasus was raised from two to six.⁵⁶⁷ Seemingly, the majority on the organising committee

⁵⁶² Ibid., 493 (paragraph 3)

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 34, 513-4

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 392

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 34, 513-4

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 32f

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 32 f; *Leninskii Sbornik*, vi 80-1, 82 [n8]

wanted the Bund to do the same, as a result of which its central committee would dissolve itself and place its resources at the disposal of the RSDLP as a whole, in return for a large number of extra congress votes. Having decided that they were actually part of an actually existing RSDLP, this was clearly the most logical thing for the Bund to do: the alternative was simply to break with the RSDLP, as there was no likelihood from this point on of it adopting an internal constitution to the Bund's liking. It seems fairly clear that the Bund toyed with this idea in the spring of 1903 but it did not act in a decisive manner.⁵⁶⁸ Instead it remained in the RSDLP and agreed to attend the congress at which it would be formally entitled to just five delegates out of a much larger number.⁵⁶⁹ In fact, given the Bund's preference for a federation of social-democratic parties, each of which represented different ethnic groups, it would have made far more sense to have adopted the position of the Poles and the Lithuanians. This involved allowing the RSDLP to hold its congress, and only afterwards entering into negotiations with it. Indeed, an alliance with the Poles and the Lithuanians would have made much more sense at this stage, even if in the short term, the Bund might have received some criticism for splitting with a party it had helped to create.

It remains something of a mystery and, as such, the subject of further research why the Bund made the decision it did. However, the fact that at root it supported a racially segregated workers' movement appears to have been the crucial factor. Martov demonstrates this in his report to the Second Congress on events in Riga during 1902 when, under the influence of the Bund, the social-democratic movement developed separate Jewish, Lettish and Russian organisations, each of which was bound to operate only among workers of its own nationality in this racially mixed town.⁵⁷⁰ The organisational absurdities of such a system are not hard to imagine, especially in a situation where the social segregation of workers may not be as great as their would-be leaders' political segregation. This negative attitude on the part of

⁵⁶⁸ *Poslednie Izvestiia* 105 (Jan. 28/15, 1903) 1; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 330-6

⁵⁶⁹ The Bund was awarded two delegates from its émigré organisation, the Foreign Committee of the Bund, and three from its Russian Central Committee. The figure of three may have been taken from the number of Bundists who attended the First Congress of the RSDLP [*KPSS v resoliutsiakh*, 13; *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 513]

⁵⁷⁰ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 489-92

the Bund to non-Jewish workers seems to have hampered their tactical thinking, and to have set them against the Polish social-democrats in particular. Circumstantial evidence suggests that we should not blame anti-semitism for this outcome, so much as the fact that, under the influence of leaders such as Luxembourg, the Polish social-democracy took an extremely hostile attitude towards nationalism of all forms. This led to them opposing the right of stateless peoples such as the Poles to self-determination, on the grounds that it might inflame national feeling.⁵⁷¹ This attitude would have clearly obstructed any alliance with the Bund, who would have probably felt that they stood a better chance of obtaining recognition from the *Iskra* majority in the RSDLP, which did at least recognise the right of all national minorities inside Russia to form independent nation states, or even to fuse with another pre-existing state should they wish to.⁵⁷² Against this, there can be no doubt that *Iskra* and the Bund were destined to clash because of the latter's rather imperious assertion that it represented *all* Jews in the Russian labour movement, an outlook which can have only annoyed the large number of Jews who supported *Iskra* by posing the question of their own *individual* right to determine their national identity.⁵⁷³ Ultimately, the latter supported racial integration and the right to break with their own Jewish origins, whereas the former wanted to maintain at all costs a separate Jewish identity. For this reason, the Bund would never have been able to find a political home for itself inside a centralised RSDLP and it is tempting to conclude that it should have broken with it as soon as the organising committee rejected its own federal formula. Unfortunately it did not, and the result was some rather absurd scenes at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which ended with the Bund storming out of the meeting and out of the organisation whilst at the same time shattering the nerves and the political unity of the *Iskra* supporters.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 504-7

⁵⁷² VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 454-64

⁵⁷³ *Minutes of the RSDLP Second Congress*, 83

The basic line of argument pursued throughout this chapter is that in March 1902, Lenin sketched out a highly democratic plan for the construction of a Second RSDLP congress and that, following the Economists' failure to bring together such a meeting, he spent the next year and four months bringing the plan to life. This episode shows that during the *Iskra* period Lenin was concerned to give the RSDLP a constitutional framework, on the basis of which different political tendencies within the labour movement could participate in a common party. It also proves that, even though he was prepared to fight hard for the interests of the revolutionary Marxists, he was fundamentally prepared to submit to majority rule inside the RSDLP and to work within cross-factional institutions such as the organising committee. This was the case even when such institutions were dominated by the Economists. This is clear from the way in which he proposed that the Economist-dominated Belostock meeting elect an organising committee and a programme commission. His confidence in accepting such arrangements was based in a faith in the revolutionaries' superiority in terms of their theoretical arguments, their energy and commitment and their greater experience at conducting political work in highly repressive circumstances.

Because of these advantages, Lenin appeared to believe that *Iskra* could ultimately come to dominate its opponents, by offering them the use of its facilities and personnel, not to mention a whole series of constructive ideas. Thus they would become authoritative within the party despite their status as a minority, whose forces were at this stage incapable of marshalling the type of support enjoyed by the leaders of the Bund or the Southern Union. In the short term, this type of strategy naturally required a certain amount of compromise on the part of *Iskra*. For example, there is no reference to centralised party structures or a specifically revolutionary party programme in the period from Belostock to Pskov: instead, Lenin poses the need for party structures and a party programme in the most general terms. In relation to the programme, the draft presented to any cross-factional commission by Lenin and Plekhanov would have been clearly revolutionary, but at the same time Lenin was clearly prepared to tolerate its being watered down by the Economists. The calculation here is based on the fact that the Economists themselves had more or less

admitted their own inability to produce a theoretical statement of the RSDLP's basic world view worthy of the name. On this basis, the Plekhanovites could act as if they were offering a service to the party, when at the same time they were promoting their own specific point of view. The former aspect would probably limit the degree to which the draft would be attacked, but this was no absolute guarantee against its content being converted into some sort of uneasy compromise between the reformist and revolutionary world view. Concerning the party constitution, Lenin says absolutely nothing in his letter to the Belostock meeting. This implies that he is prepared to tolerate a federal party constitution at this stage. This conclusion can be drawn from the documents of the 1900 attempt which, if Martov's account is to be believed, the Lenin group also made no attempt to modify. Strange though it may seem, it therefore appears that in the post-Belostock period Lenin had in mind a kind of workers' party sharing certain parallels with the British Labour Party during a later period: federal, mass-membership and with theoretical principles, in the form of the old Clause Four, fudging the distinction between revolutionary and reformist ideas.

The question which inevitably follows from this is that of what made Lenin change and, indeed, how much his views on the RSDLP internal regime actually did change. One key factor appears to have been chance, in so far as the Tsar's police completely destroyed the Southern Union, an occurrence which utterly changed the balance of forces between the revolutionaries and the reformists. Following this event, the latter could only maintain a strong presence among the Jewish population of the pale. Lenin naturally sought to take advantage of this situation, which illustrates once again how ridiculous the notion that Lenin had a detailed plan for the takeover of the RSDLP worked out even in Shushenkoye. On the basis of the former group's greater resilience the wake of the police onslaught, the balance of power between *Iskra* and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* was reversed, and this reversal led to some new notions concerning party organisation. As a result of this more favourable situation Lenin for the first time began to make a move against federalist notions in the RSDLP, in favour of the more familiar centralism that had up to this point prevailed only in the *Iskra* organisation itself. Specifically, with the Southern Union formally declared defunct and its remnants now loyal to *Iskra*, it was now possible to raise the idea of significantly modifying the Bund's organisational structures, rather than simply

copying them. At its most radical, this policy could have involved converting the Bund into a 'North Western Union of the RSDLP', to use the words of one *Iskra* supporter at the Second Congress, an organisation which would repudiate its former racial identity and admit all social-democratic workers.⁵⁷⁴ However, there is simply no evidence that Lenin thought it politically feasible to go to this logical extreme at this stage or at any other, still less to force this type of arrangement on to the Jewish organisation, whilst there is evidence that, in the last analysis he was prepared to make concessions to Jewish separatism.⁵⁷⁵ This said, the exact status of the Bund in the RSDLP was to some degree a side issue. The main points were that *Iskra* and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* did expect the Jewish organisation to submit to a higher RSDLP authority; and that the previous notion of power residing primarily in regional unions, linked only by a relatively powerless central committee and party newspaper, was no longer to be accepted. Consequently, even if the Bund did demand and achieve significant concessions in the direction of federalism, the rest of the party would operate in accordance with *Iskra* centralising principles rather than imitating the pattern set by the Bund as had previously been the case. Accordingly, local and regional papers outside the pale such as *Rabochaia Mysl'* and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* would be fused into one official party newspaper along with *Iskra*. No attempts would be made to revise the Southern regional structure and its Caucasian equivalent would be either dissolved or reorganised so as to play a more modest role in party affairs. Thus the triumph of centralism over federalism would probably have taken the form of converting the Bund once more into an unusual exception to the general principle of centralism, rather than the federalistic rule it had become in the period between 1898 and 1902.

Thus emerges the idea of a more centralised party, modelled to some degree on the *Iskra* organisation. As has been shown, there was nothing unusual in the idea of reorganising the party along the lines of one of its more influential parts. Lenin was only doing with *Iuzhnii Rabochii* what the Bund had earlier done with Kopel'zon and Lalaunts. In this sense the *Iskra* policy in the organising committee could not be viewed as an unfair attempt at factional takeover. It was simply that, having spent a

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 95

⁵⁷⁵ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 340

whole period in the minority, during which time it submitted to the views of the majority in organisational questions, *Iskra* felt that it was entitled to assert its own definite view on the party, in alliance with *Iuzhnii Rabochii* once it was in a position to do so. As shall be demonstrated in the next section, this was not in the end tolerated by *Iskra*'s opponents who, very simply, did not appear to enjoy being in a minority and therefore engaged in disruptive and splitting activities. This does not reflect badly on *Iskra*'s policy, so much as the inability of the Bund and the Economists to tolerate the idea of a multi-tendency workers party that they did not control. Specifically, it seems they could tolerate pluralism so long as it was they who held the power and it was the revolutionary Marxists who played the role of loyal opposition: so long as it was the latter who were prepared to submit to others' views for the sake of party unity. When the roles were reversed, this commitment to a multi-tendency party suddenly disappeared, a circumstance which suggests that both the Bund and the Economists simply used the RSDLP as a plaything for their own factional interests, and had no broader commitment to building a workers' party. In other words, they would support building the RSDLP so long as it was reformist and federalist, but under no other conditions, whereas the revolutionaries were much more flexible. This naturally poses a whole series of questions concerning which side was the more tolerant and loyal and which was the more dogmatic and given to unwarranted splits.

Chapter Five: December 1902-August 1903: Struggle

In the previous chapter, the central argument was that there was a conflict between undemocratic federalism and democratic centralism passing through two distinct, though in fact overlapping phases. The first of these started with Lenin's letter to the Belostock meeting and ended with the election of a significant majority of *Iskra* delegates to the Second Congress by the local committees. The period between these two points was marked by: the capture of the St Petersburg committee; the realignment of *Iuzhnii Rabochii*; the capture of the organising committee; and declarations of support for this body and its centralistic assumptions by a significant majority of Russian social-democratic committees. As such it represents a period of unalloyed victories for the revolutionary Marxist faction. The second, which will be described in this chapter, proves to be much less one-sided. Its most significant feature is the attempts to overturn these gains by the remnants of the reformist wing of the party, attempts that earned partial successes, even as the revolutionaries were consolidating their dominance through their majority at the Second Congress. These successes seem all the more remarkable in so far as the reformists' counter-campaign was for a long time not guided by any consciously worked-out strategy, in contrast to the *Iskra* campaign of the previous period. Instead, it appeared to consist in energetic attempts to frustrate and disrupt *Iskra*'s measures aimed at transforming the party's organisational structure, and its main methods appear to have been procedural objections, obstruction, the instigation of meaningless or hopeless controversies, and delay. Only with the recruitment of the *Iskra* editor Martov to their campaign did this begin to change, with this individual devising a plan to put an end to the conflict between the revolutionaries and the reformists.

Some of the earliest signs of resistance to *Iskra* in the organising committee, in the form of the controversy over the definition of the RSDLP as an existing or non-existing organisation, have already been discussed. Were it a question of a campaign with a positive end in sight, this defeat would have represented the last stand of the Bund in the RSDLP. The organising committee, in its resolution of this question, denied the Bund the one thing that was most important to it: the complete preservation of its existing structures, with the effect that the Bund now had to leave the RSDLP in

order to obtain what it really wanted - an independent Jewish socialist party operating as part of a broader federation of social-democratic parties within the Russian empire. However this did not occur because the Bund, instead of following this line began to engage in a war of attrition whose sole aim was to weaken the revolutionary Marxists, probably calculating that, as a more solid organisation it would gain in relative terms from such a contest. Thus, showing scant regard for the aim of its struggle in the organising committee, the Bund remained in the RSDLP and attended the Second Congress with a rump of five delegates. In alliance with three adherents of the defunct *Rabochee Delo*, this small minority was able to exert a surprisingly large degree of influence on the course of the meeting using the conventional combat methods of parliamentary struggle: filibuster, the quibbling of procedural points, the 'talking out' of a question and so on. The general aim of this was to put irresistible pressure on the meeting's agenda and, through its abridgement, thus minimising the degree to which *Iskra* could use its majority to transform the RSDLP into a democratic centralist, revolutionary Marxist party. Thus, though clearly not in a position to win significant concessions in any of the debates in terms of their voting power, the Bund-Economist bloc quite effectively wore down the nerves and sapped the will of a section of its revolutionary opponents. The most important, yet clearly unplanned consequence of this was the actual splitting of the *Iskra* delegation, an outcome the reformists could scarcely have anticipated. A minority of the *Iskra* bloc broke with the majority seemingly as a result of the determined pressure of the anti-*Iskra* factions and appeared to adopt a policy of appeasement in an attempt to put an end to the disruption the latter were causing to the meeting.

More intriguingly still, it seems that the weak unity the *Iskra* bloc displayed at the Second Congress was the product of a previous battle with the Economists, which took place around the time the organising committee was re-formed. The policy of fusing *Iskra*-dominated local committees with the Russian *Iskra* organisation, which included accepting *Iskra* agents onto the former, making a public declaration of loyalty to the principles of the paper and remitting funds to it, seems to have produced a pro-Economist rebellion in both St Petersburg and Kiev during the final months of 1902. In St Petersburg, this went as far as the Economists setting up a rival committee, an event which apparently led to fears among a group of émigré

supporters of *Iskra* that a similar split would take place throughout the entire RSDLP, the result being two separate Russian social-democratic parties. On the basis of this fear, criticism of the Russian *Iskra* organisation's fusion policy appears to have gained an audience amongst a certain section of *Iskra* supporters. This mood of opposition to Lenin's strategy appears to have solidified among a minority of revolutionary Marxists following the arrest of some of the most senior *Iskra* agents, in connection with the Pskov organisation committee meeting: their resolve, it seems, was weakening. As a result of these practical setbacks, Russian *Iskra* appears to have gone into a period of relative passivity. Organising committee duties increasingly appear to have been taken up by the representatives of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and those *Iskra* supporters increasingly critical of their own faction's previous organisational policy, and who were therefore seeking to distance themselves from the Russian network of agents in particular. Thus, the *Iskra* bloc, whose unity was broken at the Second Congress by the actions of the Bund and the Economists, appears to have been subject to internal strain for many months prior to this event though, as we have already suggested, this fact was probably unknown to the reformists. This strain was only exacerbated by the behaviour of the Bund and the Economists at the meeting itself, in the sense that two opposing policies emerged concerning the future of the Russian *Iskra* organisation. Whilst all the revolutionary Marxists were agreed that it had to be formally dissolved in accordance with the policy of fusing all pre-existing organisations into a common RSDLP structure, the scale of reformist resistance at the Congress caused Lenin to conclude that factional battles would probably continue after the congress, with the effect that he advocated reserving all the leading positions in the RSDLP for those previously committed to the journalistic and practical wings of *Iskra*: thus the new RSDLP apparatus would closely resemble the old *Iskra* factional apparatus. Conversely, the group around Martov advocated admitting a significant majority critical of *Iskra* into the new structures, whilst at the same time allowing the anti-*Iskra* factions to retain their own special organisations alongside the new centralised party structure.

For all these reasons the notion that the split in *Iskra* was the product of some arcane dispute about the first clause of the party's constitution, an absurdly simplistic,

yet fairly common explanation of the event is rejected in the present chapter.⁵⁷⁶ One cannot argue that a long-term split in the Russian social-democratic movement emerged from a quibble, only for it to then acquire principled substance by some mysterious process, the result of which was crucial disagreements on the questions of alliances with the bourgeoisie in the democratic revolution and the socialist seizure of power in a backward country.⁵⁷⁷ It makes far more sense to accept that a well-established reformist trend existed in Russian social-democracy *prior* to the Second Congress and that, via disagreements over the nature of party membership and other issues, the previously revolutionary Mensheviks simply joined it, betraying their former allies in a clumsy attempt to achieve peace in the party. Equally, the idea found in left-wing circles that the split was unnecessary and without reason is rejected.⁵⁷⁸ In fact it touched on a number of issues: whether and under what conditions a revolutionary Marxist factional apparatus was necessary in a broad party; whether it was legitimate for revolutionary Marxists not just to participate in broader workers' parties but to lead and control them; whether revolutionaries had the right to reorganise parties they had won control of; whether this type of re-organisation could extend to dissolving the factional apparatuses of their opponents; whether it could use command methods to ensure the membership carried out the decisions of the democratically-elected congress and so on. Whilst there is no intention of examining the rights and wrongs of all these issues in the present study, what follows will at least demonstrate their existence as factors in the split and, in doing so show how seriously mistaken are attempts to explain it exclusively with reference to the minutes of that

⁵⁷⁶ *History the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Short Course*, ed. Commission of the C.C. of the C.P.S.U (B) (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939), 41-2; BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 241; L Haimson, *The Russian Marxists*, 175; DW Treadgold, *Lenin and his rivals: the struggle for Russia's future, 1898-1906*, (New York: Praeger, 1955), 101-3; G Walter, *Lénine* 116-8; V Zevin & G Golikov, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin: Life and Work*, (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1973) 35-8; M Liebman, *Leninism under Lenin*, 33-4; Y Askutin *Lenin: Pages from a Life of Struggle*, translated by A Ogorodnev, (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1983), 27-8; P Pomper, *The Intelligentsia and Power*, 73; P Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, (New York: Humanity Books, 1993) 69; O Figs, *A People's Tragedy*, 151

⁵⁷⁷ BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 240-64; L Haimson, *The Russian Marxists*, 165-208; T Cliff, *Lenin*, (London: Pluto Press, 1975) i 124-5

⁵⁷⁸ T Cliff, *Lenin*, i 118-24; A Woods & T Grant, *Lenin & Trotsky: what they really stood for: A Reply to Monty Johnstone*, second printed edition, (London: Militant, 1976) 9-11

meeting, almost to the exclusion of all other sources.⁵⁷⁹ These minutes, however useful, only give a rough illustration of how the split actually happened but do not reveal all its underlying causes. To find these it has been necessary to study a series of documents dating from the time of the Pskov conference up to the opening of the Second Congress, not to mention the accounts given by Lenin, Krasikov and Martov of the *Iskra* caucus meetings during the congress itself, where the actual breakdown of relations between the *Iskra* majority and minority took place.

For this reason the present account of the Second Congress cannot be strictly chronological in order, as different phases of the Second Congress itself are affected by different phases of its pre-history that do not follow each other in time. Instead we have identified two key processes, one concerning the reformists, the other the internal relations among the revolutionaries, each of which has its effect on two of the most important conflicts at the congress: the clash between *Iskra* as a whole and the Economist-Bund bloc, and the struggle within *Iskra* itself. These processes will be traced separately, showing how each handed something of a victory to reformism even as the rather slow-witted representatives of the reformist organisations, failing to realise their advantage, walked out of the congress. The present chapter will also illustrate how Martov, as a result of these pressures came to develop a strategy aiming to grant concessions both to the anti-*Iskra* factions and to the critical trend within *Iskra*, and how in doing so he emerged as the intellectual leader of a new phenomenon, Menshevism, at the congress and in the post-congress period.

⁵⁷⁹ BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 230-48; PN Pospelov et al, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, 98-102; L Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 48-54; R Service, *Lenin, A Political Life*, 100-5

i) *The Resistance Campaign of the Bund and the Economists*

Earlier, it was shown how, from the time the first attempt at a Second Congress in 1900, the Bund appeared to be aiming at looser relations with the non-Jewish social democracy in Russia. At a local level this appeared to result in the organised separation of Jewish workers from those of other ethnic groups, with the effect that contact between social-democratic workers of different nationalities was mediated by a tiny group of leaders. At least, this type of arrangement is clearly shown in the 'Letter from Riga' read by Martov at the Second Congress. This source suggests that the leaders of the different ethnic workers' organisations would negotiate relations between the national groupings and discourage direct contact between rank and file workers of different nationalities.⁵⁸⁰ Not only this, there is evidence that during the same period the Bund was seeking to increase its sphere of influence by setting up exclusively Jewish organisations in the southern region.⁵⁸¹ This was controversial as it involved the claim that non-Jewish social-democratic organisations were incapable of properly representing the interests of Jewish workers, even in areas where Jews had freely joined such organisations and had a history of co-operation with Russians, Poles and Ukrainians.

These highly divisive features of Bund policy were eventually codified in the organisations' revised constitution which was passed at its Fifth Congress, a meeting held just a few weeks before the Second Congress of the RSDLP in June 1903.⁵⁸² Even without these specific features, this 'constitution' was problematic in so far as it sought to precisely define relations between Jewish and non-Jewish social democratic organisations operating within Russia without consulting the latter. For this reason, leading *Iskra* members regarded it as an attempt on the part of the Bund to 'dictate a treaty' to the rest of the RSDLP - in other words, an attempt to tell the party as a whole how it should be organised, without tolerating input from the other component

⁵⁸⁰ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 489-90

⁵⁸¹ *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sep. 1901), 125 [resolution 12]; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 89, 92-5

⁵⁸² *Piatyi s'ezd vseobshchego evreiskogo rabocheho soiuz a Litve, Polshe i Rossii*, (London: Bund, 1903) 3; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 80

parts of it in relation to this question.⁵⁸³ In this context, its second paragraph made a particularly aggressive statement:

The Bund is the Social Democratic organisation of the Jewish proletariat not restricted in its activity by any geographical limits and it enters the party as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat.⁵⁸⁴

The Bund's policy of creating and encouraging separate ethnically based workers organisations was in this way radicalised to the point where it made a claim to represent all Jews in the party. This would include those participating in integrated organizations: it was to be the 'sole representative of the Jewish proletariat'. It seems reasonable to assume that, were this principle to be accepted, Jews belonging to organisations other than the Bund would either be invited to leave these organisations and to enter the exclusively Jewish organisation, or instructed to accept the Bund leadership as their spokesman on political issues, without having any rights in relation to the election or control of this leadership. Apparently, this bold claim on the political allegiance of integrated Jews is made despite the clear political differences that existed between the Bund and the *Iskra* dominated Russian movement. The Bund appears to ignore the fact that some Jewish revolutionary Marxists had consciously chosen not to join the Bund organisation and that the consent of these integrated Jews for their change in political status had no more been obtained than that of the social-democratic organisations to which they belonged. It seems likely that the new constitution of the Bund therefore involved an undemocratic, unfair and presumptuous assertion of rights over those who played no part in its construction. Not only that, the part of the constitution cited is interesting in so far as it contains the implication that the Bund was not actually a part of the RSDLP, a view which rehearses the argument earlier rejected by the organising committee concerning the fact of the party's existence.⁵⁸⁵ Disregarding this decision, the Bund resolution uses the present tense: it 'enters' the RSDLP, ignoring the fact that in the view of everybody else it 'entered' it in 1898, at its First Congress, and that in the absence of

⁵⁸³ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 79, 82, 123

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 76f [Liber's resolution]

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 495

a clear declaration to the contrary, it was assumed to remain a part of this party.⁵⁸⁶ Against this background, the continued assumption that the RSDLP did not yet exist and that the forthcoming congress was a founding one represented persistent dissent against the decision of a committee to which it had freely granted authoritative powers. Thus we see evidence of the Bund's preference for uncooperative behaviour, as there was no likelihood of congress overturning the decisions of the organising committee given the scheme of representation that had been agreed.

The Bund's behaviour became more problematic in so far as the Fifth Congress instructed the Bund's delegation to the Second Congress of the RSDLP to present this federal constitution as a resolution in the debate on the RSDLP's organizational rules. In case of its rejection, a compromise document was drawn up in advance, in which the original demands were mixed with centralising elements: the RSDLP congress was granted the right to overrule the decisions of the Bund congress, but the Bund would retain all its separate structures, such as an independent central committee and newspaper.⁵⁸⁷ This was to be submitted in the form of an ultimatum to the RSDLP, meaning that if it was rejected, the Bund delegates would leave the congress.⁵⁸⁸ With this strategy determined beforehand, the Bund inevitably developed an excessive concern with procedural points at the subsequent congress of the RSDLP when the agenda drafted by Lenin and Martov placed the question of the Bund's relation to the rest of the RSDLP as the first item.⁵⁸⁹ In the light of the Fifth Congress decisions, this agenda seemed to suggest that an unnaturally rapid exit for the Bund both from the Second Congress and the RSDLP was likely, a view since echoed by certain hostile critics of Lenin who have viewed this agenda as means of manipulating

⁵⁸⁶ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 350; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 330-1; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 31

⁵⁸⁷ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 127 f [Liber's resolution]

⁵⁸⁸ Bund, *Piatyi S'ezd*, 6-7, 25-7; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 127. In the minutes of the Bund's Fifth Congress we find both the resolutions Liber submitted to the Second Congress of the RSDLP. The 'compromise' resolution is accompanied by the following preamble: « После разбора всех остальных §§, совокупность ультимативных пунктов получила след. вид. » [Bund, *Piatyi S'ezd*, 25] The paragraphs in question clearly refer to those of the first 'constitution' Liber submitted to the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

⁵⁸⁹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, vi 53-60

the congress.⁵⁹⁰ However, this is a false interpretation of the *Iskra* leaders' actions at this point: it was the Bund who had freely chosen to issue what it had describes in its own words as an 'ultimatum' to the RSDLP. Given this fact, it is actually meaningless to argue about the precise point in proceedings at which that ultimatum should have been discussed. The *Iskra* leaders' decision seems reasonable in so far as the struggles around the organising committee had already shown that the question of these relations could easily lead to a split: it seems extremely irregular to allow a group planning to leave the RSDLP to have influence on the debate on its programme, constitution, tactics and the like, as a parting shot. Before discussing this detail, Lenin argued that it was first necessary to establish who it was exactly that considered themselves part of the RSDLP.⁵⁹¹ Not only that, the opening debate on the Bund was to be framed in the most general terms, with the effect that no constitution of any type would be adopted at the end of the debate. On the contrary, congress would make a decision 'in principle', in favour of either centralistic or federal organisational principles. Having made that decision, the Bund would then have the opportunity to leave if it was not satisfied with the principle adopted, thus accepting that it had no right to influence the debate on a party constitution which it had no intention of recognising. If, on the other hand, it decided to stay at the end of the first debate, it would naturally have both the right to influence the party rules debate and at the same time the obligation of adhering to whatever decision the congress made. Thus, the inevitable arguments with the Bund would be kept within certain limits, ensuring a certain minimum of order at the congress.

The agenda drafted by Lenin and Martov had to be approved by the congress itself, and because of the Bund's fear of an early exit, it put up stiff resistance to the *Iskra* proposal.⁵⁹² Thus it seems that the Bund delegates did not want to leave the RSDLP in good order on the basis of clearly articulated disagreements, but wanted instead to make the split as difficult as possible for *Iskra* by means of fighting a rearguard action, with the aim of forcing its opponent to concede its demands. This

⁵⁹⁰ J.L.H. Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 119; P. Pomper, *The Intelligentsia and Power*, 73

⁵⁹¹ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 117: '(I)t is impossible to discuss the Party's internal affairs until we have decided, firmly and steadfastly, whether we want to march together.' [Lenin]

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 41-8

can be seen from the following developments. In the debate on the agenda, the Bund delegates argued that a general discussion of the relations between their own organisation and the RSDLP was not necessary, a dubious claim, to say the least.⁵⁹³ Behind this can be detected the intention of remaining at the congress for as long as possible and of exercising the maximum amount of influence on its decisions, before leaving and refusing to recognise the decisions it had helped shape, should its ultimatum not be accepted. Clearly this produced the danger that concessions might be granted to the Bund minority, the character of which would be binding on the RSDLP even after the Bund itself had disowned the organisation. For this reason, the *Iskra* agenda was approved.⁵⁹⁴ However, having suffered this defeat, the Bund delegates then simply refused to acknowledge the nature of the first debate as defined by the majority of the congress, thus demonstrating the same contempt for official decisions which their organisation had previously shown in relation to the organising committee. Thus, as a 'resolution of principle' to the first debate, MI Liber,⁵⁹⁵ the Bund's main spokesman, submitted the Bund's constitution as decided by its Fifth Congress, thus attempting to dodge general questions around racial federalism, centralism, internationalism and national chauvinism.⁵⁹⁶ This was in contrast to Martov's opposing resolution which noted, among other observations, that 'the closest unity of the Jewish proletariat with the proletariat of other races amidst which it lives is absolutely necessary in the interests of its struggle for political and economic liberation', and so on.⁵⁹⁷ The result was an extremely lengthy debate in which both sides actually talked at cross purposes with one another.

Liber tried to rebut the accusation that he was disregarding the democratically chosen congress agenda by arguing that the Bund's constitution was a clear expression of a set of organisational principles.⁵⁹⁸ However, his performance did not convince,

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 41

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 47-8

⁵⁹⁵ This is the same Liber who played a leading role in the events of 1917, as a prominent leader of the right wing of Menshevism, acting in close alliance with T Dan, whose testimony we have also used in this thesis [LD Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965) 246].

⁵⁹⁶ Bund, *Piatyi S"ezd*, 6-7; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 76f

⁵⁹⁷ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 82f

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 76: 'We are not introducing changes, but are merely proposing rules which constitute a

and he was exposed when, after some nine hours of debate, these 'organisational principles in constitutional form' were withdrawn, and the pre-prepared compromise document substituted for them.⁵⁹⁹ This change produced incredulity among the *Iskra* supporters, for whom political principles were not something one compromised in order to resolve a disagreement. The debate for them was about basic beliefs, and if such a debate did not exclude individuals changing their mind, the ideas at stake had to be clear and consistent.⁶⁰⁰ By offering to compromise, the Bund gave sufficient evidence that it was talking about a definite practical arrangement which, in its proper place, could have been the subject of proper negotiations. However, by trying to dress up practical arrangements as the starting point for a theoretical debate, they were clearly ignoring the congress agenda and throwing the meeting into confusion, presumably as a defensive strategy. They probably feared they would have been unable to defeat the *Iskra* leaders on a more theoretical plane.⁶⁰¹ Whatever the case, the subsequent proposal on the part of Liber that their 'compromise constitution' be debated 'paragraph by paragraph' must surely have undermined the pretence that the Bund was debating matters of general theory, utterly exposing the time wasting character of his tactics.⁶⁰² One of the paragraphs in question read:

The Bund elects its representation in the central committee of the Party, the Foreign Committee of the Party and the Party congresses⁶⁰³

One cannot say that such a paragraph, any more than three or four others with a similar content expresses any general social democratic value or principle, or for that matter any value or principle opposed to social democracy, connected or unconnected to questions of party organisation. Instead, this paragraph, along with

realisation and further logical development of the principles of the Manifesto of the First Party Congress.'

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 126-8. This compromise document was also worked out in advance at the Bund's Fifth Congress [Bund, *Piatyi S'ezd* 25-7].

⁶⁰⁰ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 128-30 [Martov & Plekhanov]

⁶⁰¹ VP Akimov, 'A Short History of the Russian Social-Democratic Movement', 223

⁶⁰² *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 129: 'In view of the fact that the resolution of principle prejudges the question of the new rules we have presented, I insist on a detailed examination of these new rules.'

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 127f

two or three more just like it, attempts to define the relations of power obtaining between the Bund leadership and that of the RSDLP. Thus, rather than openly expressing their views on federalism, centralism and internationalism, the Bund appeared to be initiating an untimely argument about the spoils of office, a position which can scarcely have improved their organisation's standing in the eyes of the majority of delegates. Apart from this, their whole approach utterly disregarded the official decisions of democratically constituted RSDLP bodies. The congress had decided in favour of a debate on principles, but the Bund refused to engage on this terrain, acting only in accordance with the decisions of its own congress and even then, implementing these decisions in a remarkably inflexible manner and with complete disregard for external circumstances. The opportunity to submit these resolutions was to be afforded to the Bund during item six of the congress agenda, when organisational rules were to be discussed, but the Bund delegates seemed determined to create a confrontation so as to put pressure on the *Iskra* faction.

The Bund's strategy of disruption was also taken up by the Economist representatives of the Union Abroad, who also threw the democratically constituted, but *Iskra*-dominated congress into disorder by means of excessive long and complicated interventions into the debate and procedural arguments. The most spectacular example of this came during the debate on the party programme. The Economist and former *Rabochee Delo* editor AS Martynov somehow managed to get himself appointed as the leading discussant in this debate despite not having produced a draft programme for the congress to consider.⁶⁰⁴ He also seemingly obtained an exception to the half-hour limitation on opening speeches.⁶⁰⁵ He used his time to deliver a lengthy critique of Lenin's doctrine of social-democratic consciousness as expressed in a certain well-known section of *What Is To Be Done?* This intervention was remarkable not simply because of its amazing length, but because Martynov really had no authority to lead this discussion, having not submitted a draft programme of his own, nor even producing any reasoned amendments to the

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 139 Thus we find the inconsistency of Martynov proposing the *Iskra-Zaria* draft as the basis for the discussion

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 15, 140-152 His is by far the longest individual speech at the congress.

Plekhanov-Lenin draft he was ostensibly criticising.⁶⁰⁶ Not only that, the question of *What Is To Be Done?* seems completely irrelevant to a debate on the party programme which had nothing to say on programmatic matters. For all these reasons, it seems likely that the discussion of it was introduced primarily in an attempt to provoke a split in the *Iskra* camp, rather than to have their own definite views incorporated into the Plekhanov-Lenin document. Consider the following contributions from the Economist Akimov:

I regard as mistaken Comrade Plekhanov's view that the reference to Lenin's little book was unfounded. One cannot, he says, criticise a programme on the basis of one phrase in one book written by one of the editors of the draft. The phrase of Comrade Lenin's which Comrade Martynov criticised is no isolated phrase, it expounds the fundamental idea of *What Is To Be Done?*, and that idea, it seems to me, finds expression in the draft programme. It is an idea which does not coincide at all with what Plekhanov wrote in his commentaries. And I am sure that Plekhanov does not agree with Lenin. (Laughter).⁶⁰⁷

Despite the incredulous laughter, Akimov was in fact telling the truth about Plekhanov and Lenin: there had been a whole series of disagreements between Plekhanov and Lenin over both the programme and over *What Is To Be Done?*⁶⁰⁸ It also appears that Plekhanov had been sufficiently indiscrete to admit this to Martynov at the congress in a private conversation, even if he denied these differences in the debating chamber, an error which appears to have provoked this new diversion from the official subject of discussion.⁶⁰⁹ The Bund naturally joined this utterly irrelevant debate on the side of the Economists, yet like them was utterly incapable of pointing any remotely significant features in the programme reflecting Lenin's notions of

⁶⁰⁶ Martynov in fact begins his speech thus: 'I propose that, from among the several drafts, we take the draft programme which was composed by *Iskra* and *Zaria*.' [Ibid., 139] This statement is misleading, as though there were at least two lengthy critical articles published concerning this draft, specifically by Akimov and Riazanov, there is no evidence that either produced a document capable of replacing the Lenin-Plekhanov draft as the basis for discussion at the congress [DB Riazanov *Proekt programma 'Iskry': zadachy russkikh sotsial-demokratov*. (Geneva: Bor'ba, 1903); VP Akimov, 'The Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party', 110-82]

⁶⁰⁷ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 159

⁶⁰⁸ *Leninskii Sborniki*, ii 15-170, iii 400, iv 107-8

⁶⁰⁹ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia*, xiii 138

social-democratic consciousness.⁶¹⁰ Martov thus summarised the situation fairly when he remarked:

I am amazed that all the considerations set out by Comrade Martynov should have result in nothing more than a proposal to insert the word 'consciousness' I have nothing against inserting this word.⁶¹¹

Thus the whole controversy could have been easily resolved, had the anti-*Iskra* groups been at all interested in working constructively, by means of a small concession freely offered by one of the recognised *Iskra* leaders.

Anybody familiar with the minutes of the Second Congress can be in no doubt that the Bund and Economists, who together made up a total of eight votes out of fifty-one at the congress were trying to engage in disruption because they could not dominate proceedings by any other means. There is some danger of descending into banality in describing further incidents produced by this and as such, at this point we will beg readers' understanding when we simply cite the places in the text of the minutes where these incidents occur, along with Lenin's useful discussion of them.⁶¹² It is reasonable to assume that the Bund and the Economists were trying to stop the congress carrying out its work because they knew that *Iskra* would consolidate its position of power, using its majority, by passing a programme and a party constitution together with tactical and organisational resolutions that reflected its views. Not only that, it would use the majority to elect a party leadership dominated by revolutionary Marxists. By repeatedly throwing the congress into confusion by means of arguments over correct procedure there was some hope that at least part of this process would be prevented. In particular, the lengthy character of some of the debates we have been discussing created pressure to truncate the *Iskra* devised and majority-approved agenda of the congress. This would reduce the degree to which *Iskra* could transform the RSDLP in accordance with its own preferences. If it is possible to argue that such means are in general compatible with party democracy, in so far as the minority does have the right to influence the majority using a whole variety of means, it is hard to

⁶¹⁰ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 167-8

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 152

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, 212-4, 223-229, 198-210, 373-88; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 25-6, 226-32

refrain from the observation that, in the case of the Bund and the Economists, this technique involved repeated violations of democratically legitimate decisions made by both the organising committee and the congress itself, and that minorities do not really have the right to do this. They were breaking rules and violating procedures to which they had voluntarily agreed to submit, simply because the majority view was not in accordance with their own. If party democracy is to be meaningful, respect for such rules and procedures is essential, otherwise democracy only ever remains in the realm of theory and never enters into practice.

ii) Elements within the Iskra Faction Break with Lenin's Organisational Plan

As is well-known, the *Iskra* faction split at congress into a majority, led by Lenin and a minority, led by Martov. Whilst most accounts to date have emphasised disagreements over the RSDLP constitution as an important factor in this split, we would emphasise the rather lawless pressure of the Bund and the Economists as the key factor in breaking the unity of the revolutionary Marxists. However this was clearly not the only reason behind this all-important split, in so far as a tendency had previously emerged within the *Iskra* faction that questioned Lenin plan for the reconstruction of the RSDLP. This tendency started life late in 1902, in the form of a series of objections to Lenin's policy of including all the significant anti-*Iskra* tendencies in party institutions such as the organising committee and the party congress. It developed into an opposition to the policy of factional conflict with the Bund during period in which the organising committee did its work, in early 1903, and culminated in a compromising policy at the Second Congress itself. At this meeting, Martov articulated a series of concessions with which this new anti-Lenin tendency aimed to placate the rebellious and disruptive anti-*Iskra* factions. In all these episodes, we find two key assumptions which seem to frame the thinking of the anti-Lenin *Iskra* supporters. The first of these is a pessimistic estimate of the balance of forces prevailing between *Iskra* and its opponents, the anti-Lenin current within *Iskra* consistently believing that Lenin's aim of winning primacy for the revolutionary Marxists within the RSDLP, on the basis of party democracy and pluralism was impossible. The second, closely related to the first is the argument that democratic considerations should be either bypassed or watered down in order to consolidate the

position first of the *Iskra* faction and later, following the split, of the anti-Lenin section of this grouping. The next stage of the analysis will be to illustrate these features by describing the history of this new trend in *Iskra* from its beginnings up until the Second Congress, thus showing how a process of internal dissention within *Iskra* combined with the external pressure of the Bund-Economist bloc to produce a split in *Iskra*. Thus we will see how a rebellion against Lenin's democratic centralist plan of the RSDLP was partially successful, even though the mainstay of the original opposition to Lenin, the Bund and the Economists, actually left the party at the Second Congress.

The conflict between Martov and Lenin appears to have had its roots in the relations between these two men and the Russian network of *Iskra* agents, and it dates from the autumn of 1902, the period in which the organising committee was created. During this time, Lenin was mainly situated in London.⁶¹³ Along with Krupskaya, he took responsibility for the production of the *Iskra* newspaper, whilst at the same time maintaining regular contact with the leading agents of the Russian *Iskra* organisation.⁶¹⁴ Martov, who moved to Paris at the end of November, had also had a certain amount of contact with the agents, but following his move, his closest collaborators seemed to have become individuals living in western Europe who are perhaps best characterised as ex-agents: there is not a lot of evidence that he was maintaining regular contact with activists on Russian soil at this point.⁶¹⁵ As for the rest of the editorial board, they appear to have had no links at all with the Russian underground: thus it seems most likely that the reason Martov and Lenin initially became the intellectual representatives of the two tendencies in Russian Marxism was

⁶¹³ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 69-90

⁶¹⁴ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 228-360; NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 76-9

⁶¹⁵ NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 88; *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 165-88. In these letters, Martov reveals links with VN Krokmal, EM Alexandrova, LD Trotsky, GD Leitensen, VS Bobrovsky, C Bobrovskaya, MM Litvinov and PG Smidovich all of whom were in the emigration at this point. The names of Alexandrova, Trotsky and Krokmal are particularly prominent. Krupskaya asserts that it was exclusively Lenin who worked on the organising committee project, though there is the suggestion of a contact in Moscow [*Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 177]. Whatever the case, the news Martov obtains from Kiev [*Ibid.*, iv 165] is clearly through the veterans of the Kiev gaol break such as Krokmal and Litvinov [NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 83]

owed to this closer relationship with the activists.⁶¹⁶ Specifically, their disagreement appears to have originated in a whole series of tensions that emerged within the *Iskra* network following the police raid on the Pskov conference, at which two of *Iskra*'s most important agents, VP Krasnukha and I I Radchenko were arrested, along with the Kiev-based agent PN Lepeshinskii.⁶¹⁷ These arrests left the initiative for continuing the work of the organising committee largely in the hands of the *Iuzhnii Rabochii* organisation, despite the apparent numerical dominance of *Iskra* members in the Pskov organising committee. The main reason for this was that most of those individuals from *Iskra* co-opted onto the organising committee, such as GM Krzhizhanovskii and FB Legnik, did not prove capable of performing the work of 'flying' agents.⁶¹⁸ In other words, they could not freely move from place to place, an essential qualification for any member of an effective organising committee, given their need to 'tour' the local committees, seeking support and assent for its actions.⁶¹⁹ A search was thus begun to find sufficiently experienced and mobile *Iskra* supporters to act as replacement members of the organising committee. Added to this problem, something of a rebellion was at this stage being raised against *Iskra* in both St Petersburg and Kiev, which was no doubt partially the result of leading local *Iskra* supporters first being detailed for work on the organising committee and then being arrested.⁶²⁰ Their withdrawal from work in these cities undoubtedly presented the local anti-*Iskra* factions with the spectacle of a weakened opponent, an opportunity they appeared to exploit to the full. For these reasons, the benefits accruing to the *Iskra* faction as a result of the Belostock raid increasingly seemed to be disappearing.

Faced with these strains on the Russian *Iskra* organisation, one can clearly detect a difference in response on the part of Martov and Lenin. The former appeared to take the view that, as a result of the disruption, the Economists would once more seize the initiative and dominate at any future congress of the RSDLP. As a result, he

⁶¹⁶ PB Aksel'rod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma*, 17-84; NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 88; GV Plekhanov & PB Aksel'rod, *Perepiska*, ii 132-97; AN Potresov & BI Nikolaevskii, *Sotsial-demokratcheskoe dvizhenie*, i 63-102

⁶¹⁷ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 296

⁶¹⁸ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 137-8

⁶¹⁹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 185; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 137-8

⁶²⁰ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 301-4; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 116-7, 131-2, 135-6

spoke out against Lenin's strategy for rebuilding the RSDLP. On 1st December he wrote to Lenin:

Силы не подготовлены для победы на съезде, где будут все комитеты. Если дело пойдёт дальше в такой степени «через пень колоду», как сейчас, то останется такой решительный шаг: соглашение (путем ли съезда, конференции или объезда всех «своих» комитетов: СП[етер]б[ург], Мос[ква], Тверь, Нижн[ий], Саратов, Киев, Харьк[ов], Юж[ный] Раб[очий], Сев[ерный] Союз о том, что «Искра» - центральный орган, что данные комитеты соединяются в одну организацию, назначают Ц[ентральный] К[омитет] и приглашают оставшиеся вне соглашения группы войти в соглашение с Ц[ентральным] К[омитетом]. При условии, что в упомянутых комитетах мы будем иметь большинство своих, такой путь останется единственным средством добиться скорого объединения без неизбежной - в случай спешки с общим съездом - необходимости вступить в компромисс с Союзом и Борьбой. Мелкие русск[ие] группки легко пристанут к целому, образовавшемуся таким путем; ...⁶²¹

The alternative organisational plan Martov advocates here is striking for a number of reasons. Firstly, it seems to aim at excluding opponents from an RSDLP decision-making body which would have the power to appoint a central committee and the party newspaper, purely on the grounds of their political views. The results of this openly factional conference or congress would afterwards be presented to them as a *fait accompli*. Such an aggressive strategy would scarcely be perceived as legitimate by opponents, nor possibly by elements around *Iskra*, as it represented a somewhat worse settlement for the Economists than the revolutionary Marxists received at Belostock. On that occasion the latter had at least been allowed to attend the meeting. Consequently, Martov's policy represented a break with Lenin's notion of a united social-democratic party based on constitutional norms, whose structures were

⁶²¹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 172: 'The forces aren't prepared for victory at a congress attended by all committees. If business continues in such a slapdash, lazy fashion as now, then there remains just one decisive step: agreement (whether by means of a congress, conference or a tour of all 'our' committees: St Petersburg, Moscow, Tver, Nizhnii, Saratov, Kiev, Kharkov, *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, the Northern Union about whether *Iskra* should be the central newspaper, about whether these committees should unite into one organisation, appoint a central committee and invite groups remaining outside the agreement to enter into an agreement with the Central Committee. On condition that in the aforementioned committees there will be a majority of ours, this way remains the only method of obtaining rapid unification without the inevitable - in the case of a hurried general congress - necessity of entering into a compromise with the Union [Abroad] and *Bor'ba*. Small Russian groups easily affiliate to a whole formed in such a manner;...'

constructed with the consent of all major tendencies and the most significant local organisations. The second notable feature in Martov's statement is his clear exaggeration of the Economist influence inside Russia, which is reflected in the remarks concerning the need for compromise with them and, even more strangely, with the utterly insignificant *Bor'ba* group, the new name of the clique around Riazanov.⁶²² If it can be shown without difficulty that, during this period, pro-*Rabochee Delo* elements continued to exist in the big cities such as St Petersburg, Kiev and Odessa, there is no evidence to suggest that they were united by a regularly appearing journal, with the effect that they even had to rely on *Iskra* for the publication of protests against the revolutionary Marxists' policies.⁶²³ They also lacked an organisation on a regional or national scale comparable to that of either the Bund or *Iskra*, a situation reflected in the fact that, on hearing of the creation of the organising committee, the initial response of the Economists tended towards refusing to recognise it, rather than demanding positions on it or, for that matter, constructing an alternative one.⁶²⁴ The final point of interest in Martov's new tactical idea is the potential in it for some kind of compromise with the federalism of the Bund. Though the Jewish organisation is not mentioned specifically, the idea that *Iskra* was to elect its own central committee, through which it would negotiate with other social-democratic groups clearly reflected the Bund's own organisational preferences.⁶²⁵ It too had its own central committee and newspaper, and it too wished to negotiate as a bloc with other groups, refusing to tolerate external infringements on its own internal structures.⁶²⁶

In the previous chapter we discussed Lenin's preferred method of constructing a congress based on principles of representation which, if they clearly tended towards

⁶²² *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 479-82

⁶²³ *Iskra*, 28 (Nov. 15, 1902) 6; *Iskra*, 36 (Mar. 15, 1903) 7-8; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 301-4; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 33

⁶²⁴ *Iskra*, 30 (Dec. 15, 1902) 6; *Iskra* 36 (Mar. 15 1903) 7-8; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 301; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 31, 35-6

⁶²⁵ The fact that *Iskra* already had a factional central committee appears to have been missed by Martov, a circumstance reinforcing the impression that he had very little to do with the Russian *Iskra* organisation.

⁶²⁶ *Rabochee Delo* 10 (Sep. 1901) 22-6; Bund, *Piatyi S'ezd*

penalising both federalist ideas and weakly constituted groups, did not resort to the exclusion of any definite point of view. As such, it seems that this post-Pskov period represented possibly the first time that Lenin and Martov expressed important political differences. Clearly the views of Martov went against the spirit of the Pskov conference and the entire Lenin strategy post-Belostock in so far as the organising committee elected as a result of Lenin's plan was to include all the main tendencies claiming adherence to the RSDLP. The natural implication of this was that the party congress would contain a similar cross-section of party opinion. Consequently, if it can be shown that Lenin pressed ahead with the original plans for a multi-tendency organising committee, even though arrests had deprived *Iskra* of some of its key agents, this would amount to demonstrating his rejection of Martov's alternative plan for the party congress. In fact, this is precisely what happened. On 11th December Lenin received a letter from one of the survivors of the Pskov raid, the *Iuzhnii Rabochist* E E Levin.⁶²⁷ In his reply, Lenin clearly indicates his support for the remnants of the committee, suggesting that it fill out its ranks by co-opting new members and offering advice about how to obtain the official backing of the local committees. He also suggested that *Rabochee Delo* be offered a place on the committee 'with full rights'.⁶²⁸ In this way it seems he brushed Martov's idea aside, in favour of far more open and inclusive practices in keeping with the notions he presented at the Belostock meeting.

Lenin having thus re-asserted his democratic centralist plan, the dissent within *Iskra* continued based on the belief that it was impossible for the revolutionary Marxists to defeat their rivals through a struggle for power in multi-tendency party institutions. However, from this point on Martov's idea of an exclusively factional congress was replaced by an attitude of compromise towards the anti-*Iskra* factions which, whilst it can appear as an entirely different policy, was in fact the reverse side of the same rather pessimistic coin: having failed to exclude an opponent perceived to be much stronger than *Iskra* from the forthcoming congress, the anti-Lenin group now

⁶²⁷ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 296-7

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, viii 300. The question of 'full rights' seems to imply that their representative would have voting powers in the way most of those *Iskra* supporters co-opted would not. [PB Aksel'rod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma* 78]

believed it was necessary to make peace with it so as to prevent *Iskra*'s defeat. Evidence of this new attitude is to be found in a letter from Martov to Lenin written on 20th December 1902. Martov writes:

Разумеется, союзовцы и борьбисты гудят на весь мир о том, что «раскол» будет во всех комитетах признавших «Искру». Это, конечно пустяки, а плохо то, что наши собственные «практики» по сему случаю повесили носы и наводят тоску, ведя себя при этом крайне неприлично.⁶²⁹

He then provides details of the mood of various *Iskra* supporters, among whom the name of Krokmal stands out:

Но всего возмутительнее поведение Красавца [В.Н. Крохмаля] который себя показал при этом случай истинным рабочедельцем. «Я говорил, я предупреждал, нельзя так по военному». Все это он излагал Мартене [П.Г. Смидович], очень огорчившейся (вполне искренно, конечно) выходкой своего детища. Мартена и спрашивает, правду ли говорит Красавец что весь петербургский раскол создан бестактичностью петербургских искровцев, и что последних вдохновлял «Лондон» и в частности Ленин, несмотря на предупреждения его, Красавца, который объяснял, что надо сначала укрепиться, не выгонять вышибайловцев и не спешить с «заявлением».⁶³⁰

Krokmal's complaint is informed by the actual declaration of a split in the St Petersburg organisation on the part of the Economist wing, a split announced in the thirtieth issue of *Iskra*, dated 15th December.⁶³¹ It came in the wake of a protracted

⁶²⁹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, iv 194: 'Of course, the Unionists and the *Bor'ba*-ists are droning on at everybody that there will be a 'split' in all committees recognising *Iskra*. This is, of course, nonsense, but it is a shame that our own practical workers let their noses drop, and fall into depression about this, conducting themselves in a highly unseemly manner'.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, iv 194-5: 'But all the more outrageous is the behaviour of Krokmal, who conducts himself like a true *Rabochee Delo* supporter in these circumstances. 'I said, I warned that it was impossible using military methods'. All this he expounded to PG Smidovich, who was very upset (quite sincerely, of course) by the behaviour of his protégé. And so Smidovich asks whether it is true, as Krokmal says, that the whole St Petersburg split was due to the tactlessness of the St Petersburg followers of *Iskra* and whether the latter were inspired by 'London', and by Lenin in particular in spite of his, Krokmal's warnings and his explanation that it was first necessary to strengthen our forces, rather than expelling the 'Bouncers' and hurrying with the 'announcement'.'

⁶³¹ *Iskra* 30 (Dec. 15, 1902) 6

struggle between *Iskra* and the Economists which dated back to the previous June, when I I Radchenko was able to write to Lenin that the majority of the committee was prepared to declare its allegiance to *Iskra*.⁶³² This resulted in plans that were worked out by Lenin and the St Petersburg *Iskra* group to reorganise the social-democratic movement in the capital, closing down the local newspaper, *Rabochaia Mysl'*, and developing a local apparatus based on a sophisticated division of labour, which merged seamlessly with Russian *Iskra's* nationwide operation.⁶³³ These changes led to a rebellion by the Economists during the month of September, the success of which appears to have been in part the result of the St Petersburg *Iskra* agents Radchenko and Krasnukha being detailed for work on the organising committee.⁶³⁴ The loss of two leading *Iskra* members apparently changed the balance of forces on the committee in so far as the replacement agents, ED Stassova VI Lavrov and IV Babushkin, lacked the personal authority of their predecessors.⁶³⁵ As a result, it seems a significant proportion of the St Petersburg committee decided to form a new group, on the basis of which it would try to build the closest possible links with the trades council-like Petersburg Workers' Organisation.⁶³⁶ The aim of the split was, therefore, to isolate the official committee, in the sense that the split aimed to draw a clear majority of the local movement away from *Iskra*. If it may have actually succeeded in this aim in the short term, in the long term this splitting policy was clearly doomed in so far as the new Economist splinter movement, unlike its revolutionary Marxist rivals, lacked connections throughout the country, most of whom could only have learned of the split through the Economists' announcement in *Iskra*. For this reason, Martov at this stage appears rightly sceptical about the possibility of a general split in the party as a result of *Iskra's* fusion policy. The St Petersburg scenario was the result of some definite factors connected to the formation of the organising committee, the result of *Iskra* fighting a factional struggle whilst at the same time committing forces to the construction of cross-factional RSDLP institutions. Once the organising committee was in operation, there was no reason to believe that the reversal of fortune

⁶³² VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 176-81

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, vi 179, 228, 235-52

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxiv 116-7; PB Aksel'rod & IO Martov, *Pis'ma*, 80 n3

⁶³⁵ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 126-7, 129-30, 135-6

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxiv 116-7

in St Petersburg should be replicated everywhere, even if a similar situation occurred in Kiev during the same period.⁶³⁷ Accordingly, a more general Economist rebellion failed to appear once it became clear that the overwhelming majority of local committees were prepared to support the organising committee formed at the Pskov conference.⁶³⁸

Krokhmal's protest that the policy of factional struggle must inevitably lead to a split in the RSDLP seems to rest on the view that a multi-tendency party was impossible. It did not seem to occur to him that the decision of the Economists to break with the official St Petersburg committee was not a reasonable response to a situation in which the *Iskra* majority was asserting its right to reorganise the committee in accordance with its own political beliefs. The Economists had themselves attempted similar reorganisations based on their own view, both in St Petersburg and in the party as a whole.⁶³⁹ The St Petersburg Union of Struggle, which later became the local committee of the RSDLP had in fact been created by Lenin in the winter of 1894-5, a process closely connected to his attempt to reactivate the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* group through the journal *Rabotnik*, but his subsequent arrest led to a takeover by the Economists, who seem to have introduced a policy which sought to separate the trade union struggle from the political struggle, the latter of which was to be placed exclusively in the hands of intellectuals.⁶⁴⁰ This change in the political character of St Petersburg probably had no little effect on the character of the proposed party congress of 1900, which was organised by Kopel'zon and his allies. This clearly Economist event, if it caused Plekhanov to lead to a rather ill-judged split from the Union Abroad, did not produce this kind of response in Lenin, and it seems that the entire *Iskra* project was conceived in opposition to such splitting behaviour. That is to say, *Iskra* could never accept the argument that being in a minority in an organisation, and being requested to submit to the decisions of the majority could in itself justify splitting activities. Whether in a minority or in a majority, *Iskra*

⁶³⁷ Ibid., xxxiv 128; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 301-2

⁶³⁸ *Iskra* 34 (Feb. 15, 1903) 6; *Iskra* 35 (Mar. 1, 1903) 8; *Iskra* 36 (Mar 15, 1903) 7-8

⁶³⁹ NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 20-2; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 249-84

⁶⁴⁰ NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 14; GV Plekhanov & PB Aksel'rod, *Perepiska*, i 269-75; VP Akimov, 'A Short History', 239-41, 245-6, 249-84

considered itself part of the RSDLP, a commitment both *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and the Economist had problems making. Unlike *Iskra*, both of these latter groupings seemed to be uneasy with the idea of a multi-tendency RSDLP to which they would remain loyal regardless of the precise balance of factional forces. Krokmal, in the wake of the St Petersburg split, seemed to forget this important principle. Instead he concedes a huge amount to opponents who are prepared to tolerate the idea of a multi-tendency party only to the extent that they remained the dominant tendency in it. In other words, the Economists were prepared to tolerate loyal criticism from *Iskra* of the way they organised the RSDLP but they would not tolerate any attempts by *Iskra* to change the RSDLP's organisational policy. They could tolerate *Iskra* as the loyal opposition to their own faction within the RSDLP, but could not tolerate being defeated by them, nor could they tolerate their own preferences being changed in practice as opposed to being criticised in theory. Thus, victory for *Iskra* in St Petersburg meant a walkout by the Economists: the two could only coexist in the same party so long as the Economists held the whip hand. The moment this situation was reversed, the commitment of the Economists to a multi-tendency RSDLP was exposed as utterly superficial. Despite this, at least one *Iskra* supporter, Krokmal, is prepared to side with them against Lenin.

The next phase of the resistance to Lenin came as a result of the work of the organising committee itself. As we have already noted, the arrests of leading *Iskra* personnel caused Lenin to invite a representative of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* to reconstitute the organising committee, a policy carried out with the co-option two female *Iskra* supporters, EM Alexandrova and RS Halberstadt who had connections with Martov and Krokmal: the latter, apparently, was Krokmal's wife.⁶⁴¹ These served alongside the Lenin loyalist PA Krasikov, who had been involved in both the reorganisation of the St Petersburg committee and the Pskov meeting at which the organising committee had been relaunched.⁶⁴² One feature of this collaboration was a definite tension between Alexandrova and Krasikov that mirrored the conflict between Lenin on the one hand and the Krokmal tendency on the other. This was expressed most clearly in their contrasting attitudes to the Bund. As has already been noted, the Bund

⁶⁴¹ PB Aksel'rod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma*, 80 n3; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 516

⁶⁴² *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 282-4, 292-3; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 118-9, 137-8

wanted the Second Congress to be made up of representatives of regional and national, as opposed to local organisations and for it to be a founding congress. This naturally led to conflict in and around the organising committee which expressed itself in a number of different ways. First of all it seems that the Bund's absence, though it was always officially explained as the result of a miscommunication, did actually have a political content, to the extent that the Bund quietly boycotted the Pskov meeting on the grounds that it would be dominated by the centralising factions *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and *Iskra*. As is well-known, after some delay, the Bund actually agreed to participate in the organising committee, and it seems that this change of opinion was not unconnected to the arrest of the *Iskra* agents at Pskov.⁶⁴³ Once it became clear that *Iuzhnii Rabochii* was playing a more dominant role than *Iskra* in this committee, the Bund was happy to join the body, but not prior to this point. The result of this policy was a new round of polemic between the Bund and *Iskra*, which continued even after the Bund formally entered the committee.⁶⁴⁴ It is not necessary to go into the details of all these arguments, but it is important to stress that Alexandrova consistently opposed Krasikov's combative approach to the Bund, which she believed was disrupting the work of the organising committee.⁶⁴⁵ With her help, a resolution was passed in this committee instructing both *Iskra* and the Bund to end their polemical exchanges and shortly afterwards, Alexandrova wrote a letter to both Lenin and Martov in which she stated her scepticism towards the Russian *Iskra* organisation in more general terms.⁶⁴⁶ Her main arguments were that the Russian rank and file members of the *Iskra* organisation were unthinking enthusiasts with low levels of political understanding, and that the Russian *Iskra* leadership had played no significant role in the preparatory work towards the congress, leaving the supporters of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* to carry out the majority of the work.⁶⁴⁷

The significance of Alexandrova's criticism was that, like Krokhamal, she

⁶⁴³ J.L.H. Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 109; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 30

⁶⁴⁴ *Iskra* 33 (Feb 1, 1903) 4; *Iskra* 34 (Feb. 15, 1903) 2; *Iskra* 36 (Mar. 15, 1903) 2-3; *Poslednie Izvestiia* 105 (Jan 28/15 1903); *Poslednie Izvestiia* 106 (Feb.3/ Jan 21, 1903)

⁶⁴⁵ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 349-51

⁶⁴⁶ *Iskra* 37 (Apr. 1, 1903) 8; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 345-353

⁶⁴⁷ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 346-9

opposed any policy that tended towards combining degree of inter-factional co-operation with a struggle between the factions for influence. It seems clear that both the Bund and the more conventional supporters of *Iskra* were quite capable of combining these to a degree contradictory perspectives with the effect that both had, at different times, held back from participation in the organising committee because it did not appear to be in their best interests to participate in it under certain conditions. Despite this, both sides supported the ideas of a cross factional organising committee and a generally recognised party congress. Alexandrova, by contrast, appeared much more committed to the work of the organising committee to the exclusion of all other considerations. Consequently she, clearly in alliance with *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and RS Halberstadt demanded an end to an entirely legitimate exchange of views within the party and an end to what she no doubt saw as disruptive infighting. In fact, this intervention from the organising committee could equally be regarded as an attack on the liberties of the different groupings in the party to express their views in a vital pre-congress period. If one of the key purposes of the congress itself was to resolve these debates by means of a majority decision, this was hardly the job of the committee organising this congress. The main function of the organising committee was to secure the support of a critical mass of social-democratic organisations for its plans, not to tell them what they could and could not say. Alexandrova seems to suggest that Krasikov's behaviour in the meetings were causing tensions capable of somehow disrupting the group's work, but fails to explain how this could actually be the case. By its very definition, the organising committee represented a coalition of those who strongly disagreed with one another on a whole series of issues, and if this circumstance required a certain amount of discipline in organising meetings attended by the representatives of the different factions, this could not reasonably amount to a general outlawing of disagreement, especially when the controversial articles in question were written by individuals such as Lenin and Martov, who were not themselves members of the organising committee and played no part in its work. This was simply to pre-empt one of the main functions of the congress itself and the results of the pre-congress campaigns for influence by the different factions among the local committees. As was noted earlier, at the time of the approval of the rules of representation at the congress, the majority of local committees had yet to declare their factional preferences and most appeared to be split, a fact reflected in the

decision of the organising committee to allow each organisation two delegates instead of one. This presupposed a sort of pre-congress election campaign among the committees to ensure the selection of delegates affiliated to one of the main factions: the Bund, *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, the Economists or *Iskra*. In 'banning polemic', the organising committee appeared to be taking steps to prevent this process taking on an excessively political character. In other words they tried to limit the degree to which the different groups could fight for influence, thus once again attacking Lenin's notions of pluralism within the party. Given the balance of forces in the organising committee, it is inconceivable that Alexandrova and Halberstadt did not play a role in this attempt to limit internal party democracy.

iii) How the Revolutionary Marxists Split at the Second Congress

It is now possible to see how mistaken is the view that the *Iskra* faction split over the first paragraph or any other aspect of the RSDLP's constitution, as there were clearly factors predating the congress that had an effect on it. Menshevism, as a set of ideas began to emerge many months prior to Lenin's drafting of this controversial constitution, which took place a few weeks prior to the congress in the summer of 1903.⁶⁴⁸ Moreover, in these early stages, the dissident trend expressed a series of general doubts towards Lenin's pre-congress organisational policy that seems to have had little direct relation to the provisions of Lenin's constitution, most aspects of which actually received the unanimous support of the *Iskra* faction at the Second Congress.⁶⁴⁹ Thus the conclusion is invited that the disputes over the constitution were but a weak reflection of, and at most a passing phase in an ongoing but previously hidden conflict over broader issues that divided the *Iskra* faction. This idea finds support in Lenin's own accounts of how events at the Second Congress unfolded.⁶⁵⁰ Lenin describes the first sign of conflict within the *Iskra* delegation as follows:

The first incident at the Congress to disclose that all was not well among the *Iskra*-ists, an

⁶⁴⁸ *Leninskii Sbornik*, vi 42-7

⁶⁴⁹ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 10-2, 511-2

⁶⁵⁰ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 19-34, 203-425

incident that 'set the scene' for the final drama (or tragicomedy?), was the celebrated "*incident of the Organising Committee*". This must be dealt with at length. It occurred while the Congress was still engaged in constituting itself and discussing its Standing Orders (which, by the way, consumed a tremendous amount of time on account of the obstruction of the Bundists, who, deliberately or otherwise, never missed an opportunity to cause delay). The substance of the Organising Committee incident was that, on the one hand, that body had, even before the Congress opened, rejected the protest of the *Bor'ba* group, which demanded representation at the Congress, and had stood by this decision in the Credentials Committee; and, on the other hand, *on the floor of the Congress* this same Organising Committee suddenly declared that it was inviting Riazanov in a deliberative capacity.⁶⁵¹

Thus Lenin identifies the beginning of hostilities within the *Iskra* delegation as taking place on the very first day of the Congress, towards the end of its second session and continuing into the third, which took place the following day. He also directly links it to a problem in the organising committee, thus giving a strong indication that the conflict at the congress was closely linked to the issues we have just been discussing. Further support for this idea is to be found in the way Lenin draws attention to the role of a 'Comrade N', who apparently plays a disruptive role by trying to get a representative of the three-man *Bor'ba* group invited to the congress, despite the fact that the organising committee had previously decided that this group was utterly insignificant and therefore not worthy of invitation.⁶⁵² Lenin describes her actions as follows:

Before the sittings of the Congress began, Martov confidentially informed me that a certain member of the *Iskra* organisation and of the Organising Committee (whom we shall call N) had decided to insist in the Organising Committee that it invite to the Congress in a deliberative capacity a certain individual whom Martov himself could not describe otherwise than as a "renegade". (And it was true that this individual had inclined at one time towards *Iskra* but afterwards, within a few weeks, in fact, had gone over to *Rabochee Delo*, even though the latter was already in a state of complete degeneration.) Martov and I discussed the matter and we were both indignant that a member of the *Iskra* organisation should do such a thing, knowing, of course (for Martov had warned Comrade N), that it was a direct slap in the face for *Iskra*, yet not considering it necessary even to consult the organisation.⁶⁵³

Lenin continues:

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., vii 21-2

⁶⁵² *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 32 479-85

⁶⁵³ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 22

N's wish to put spokes in *Iskra*'s wheel was further revealed in his supporting a vote of censure passed by the Organising Committee on the *Iskra* editorial board; a censure which, to be sure, concerned a very minor matter, but which nevertheless aroused Martov's profound indignation. Furthermore, information from Russia, also communicated to me by Martov, indicated a tendency on N's part to circulate rumours of dissension between the *Iskra*-ists in Russia and the *Iskra*-ists abroad.⁶⁵⁴

Thus can be seen the beginnings of an open rebellion by *Iskra* supporters on the organising committee against the organisation as a whole. Not only that, in these passages there is every reason to assume that N is Alexandrova or, possibly, two members of the organising committee - Alexandrova and RS Halberstadt. This conclusion can be drawn for the following reasons. Of the six *Iskra* members who had places on the organising committee right up until the opening of the Second Congress, two of them, Krzhizhanovskii and Legnik did not actually attend this meeting and seemed to play no role in its preparation.⁶⁵⁵ As a result there were seven members of the organising committee present at the congress, four of whom adhered to *Iskra*.⁶⁵⁶ However, in Lenin's account there appear to be just five members of the organising committee in total: one Bundist, two *Iuzhnii Rabochii* supporters and just two *Iskra* members, who disagree over the question of *Bor'ba*, referred to as T and N.⁶⁵⁷ The four actually present were: Alexandrova, AM Stopani, Krasikov and RS Halberstadt.⁶⁵⁸ Of these, both Krasikov and Stopani made vocally pro-Lenin interventions throughout the congress, strongly giving the impression that both would have opposed the rebellion of an *Iskra* member of the organising committee.⁶⁵⁹ Their view clearly appears in Lenin's account as that of Comrade T, and as he was the vice-chairman of the congress and member of the *Iskra* editorial board, we can assume that most of the talking was done by Krasikov.⁶⁶⁰ Halberstadt and Alexandrova, by contrast, played a very marginal role in the official congress proceedings, owing to the fact that neither were official delegates entitled to vote on behalf of any definite

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., vii 22

⁶⁵⁵ IG Smidovich, *Protokoly*, 36; NK Krupskaya, *Memories* 93

⁶⁵⁶ PB Aksel'rod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma* 80 n3; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 516-7

⁶⁵⁷ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 23

⁶⁵⁸ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 516-7

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., 57, 346, 421-2, 427-8, 517

⁶⁶⁰ NK Krupskaya, *Memories*, 92-3; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 16

organisation.⁶⁶¹ Alexandrova, as has been shown, had a history of criticising *Iskra* and in this connection, Lenin refers to 'a vote of censure' on the *Iskra* editorial board by the organising committee. This of course refers to the question of Lenin and Martov's polemic with the Bund over the character of the Second Congress, the scheme of representation chosen by the organising committee and other related matters. This vote of censure, in a body of nine⁶⁶² of which six were *Iskra* members could only have been passed with the support of two, not one dissident *Iskra* supporters. These two are clearly Halberstadt and Alexandrova, who thus appear to be acting in concert throughout this period. As has already been noted, it seems that this Halberstadt was the wife of the December dissident Krokmal: consequently we get the sense that some kind of dissident clique within *Iskra* emerged during late 1902 and early 1903 based around these three people. This is especially significant when we consider that in this 'organising committee incident' Martov appears to be firmly on the side of Lenin, hence his 'profound indignation'. The unavoidable conclusion is that, though he was not unconnected with the dissident trend, Martov clearly did not initiate its rebellion at the Second Congress.

It is now necessary to pose the question of what motivated the *Iskra* rebels at this stage and ask why they wanted to invite a representative of *Bor'ba* to the Second Congress, and why this invitation was significant. It seems that Lenin is accurate when he writes that this simply 'wanted to put a spoke in the wheel' of the *Iskra* leadership and that they were not motivated by a clear ideological goal. In other words, there does not appear to be anything in the writings of Riazanov or any of the other *Bor'ba* members that could have contributed to a principled fight against the dominant *Iskra* line. It is worth recalling that this group was essentially a continuation

⁶⁶¹ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 515

⁶⁶² We are working according to the testimony of the Mensheviks FI (T) & LO Dan, and BI Nikolaevskii, who list the members of the Organising Committee, once reconstituted following the Pskov arrests as: K Portnoy (Bund); EE Levin & VN Rosanov (*Iuzhnii Rabochii*); RS Halberstadt & EM Alexandrova (dissident *Iskra*); PA Krasikov, FB Legnik & GM Krzhizhanovskii (pro-Lenin *Iskra*). [PB Aksel'rod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma*, 80 n3] We make the assumption here that following the arrest of the *Iskra* agents, the original idea of having a core membership of the organising committee which decided its policy and was made up of one voting representative of the Bund, *Iskra*, St Petersburg and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* respectively, was abandoned.

of the group which had attempted to reconcile the Union Abroad with *Sotsial-Demokrat* during the first half of 1901 and which had distinguished itself with a rather childish 'boycott' of *Iskra* as a result of Lenin's article *Where To Begin?* Since that time, it appears to have helped the Southern Union in its publishing work and one gets the sense it may have had links with the *Rabochaia Volia* splinter group in Odessa.⁶⁶³ However, at the time of the Second Congress there is no independent evidence of its continued activity, which was surely smaller in scope than several other groups that were excluded because of their small size.⁶⁶⁴ On the other hand, Riazanov was quite capable of arguing at great length about the *Iskra-Zaria* draft programme and had already published a book-sized pamphlet on this theme.⁶⁶⁵ Thus the *Bor'ba* group comes across as a potentially highly disruptive but utterly unrepresentative clique, capable of dominating the congress yet lacking the support of a single social-democratic organisation, and without a track record of constructive work towards building the party.⁶⁶⁶ The arguments against inviting such individuals to a party congress should be fairly clear, especially as they appeared to have the right to distribute their literature to all congress delegates and the right to petition delegates to speak on their behalf.⁶⁶⁷ For these reasons, it seems that the question of *Bor'ba* was simply a pretext for picking a fight with the *Iskra* editorial board on the part of some of the *Iskra* members of the organising committee. There appear to have been several motives for such a move. The most important of these appears to be that the organising committee itself was faced with being relieved of its responsibilities, owing to the election by congress of an official central committee. Given the balance of forces at the congress, it must have seemed a matter of inevitability that the core of

⁶⁶³ OA Ermanskii, *Otchet s"ezda iuzhnikh komitetov; Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 32-3

⁶⁶⁴ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 479-82

⁶⁶⁵ i.e N Riazanov, *Proekt programma 'Iskry'*

⁶⁶⁶ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 32, 35 48-70, 514, 493 [paragraph 6]: the entire debate about *Bor'ba*'s right to be at the congress does not involve a single representative from a local committee.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 52, 70-1, 494 [paragraph 11] For these reasons it seems that the recent complaints on the part of Rokitanskii concerning the exclusion of Riazanov from the Second Congress are misplaced. Rokitanskii's arguments on this point are, by and large, a rehearsal of those made by Akimov at the time. See VP Akimov, 'The Second Congress of the RSDLP' in *VP Akimov and the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism*, 103; Ya G Rokitanskii, 'Stolknovenie Riazanova c Leninym' 808-9.

this new committee would have been three leading members of the Russian *Iskra* organisation who supported the Lenin policy: Krzhizhanovskii, Legnik and Noskov.⁶⁶⁸ Given the conflict with the émigré leaders of *Iskra* over the faction's policy towards the Bund and the conflict with Lenin over the validity of the Russian *Iskra* organisation, Alexandrova and Halberstadt may therefore have acquired the sense that their days as leading underground activists were numbered, on the grounds that there was little likelihood of their being co-opted to the central committee by this new leading trio. Their fears on this point were almost certainly shared by the *Iuzhnii Rabochii* representatives on the organising committee. This seems obvious if the whole policy of the southern group since the previous August is taken into account: it appears to have been motivated by the desire to re-establish their own newspaper, the *rapprochement* with *Iskra* and the work on the organising committee to some degree acting as a means to this end. Of particular interest is the rather superficial nature of their declaration of support for *Iskra*, which consists mainly in stereotyped phrases concerning 'strict centralisation' and 'handicraft methods', but which does not reveal clear views on how the RSDLP should be organised.⁶⁶⁹ Against the background of *Iuzhnii Rabochii*'s previous involvement in the federalist Southern Union, such a declaration is hard to take seriously, especially when taken in combination with the attempt to relaunch their own newspaper.⁶⁷⁰ Surely a genuine advocate of 'strict centralisation' would want to merge its resources with the *Iskra* with whom it declared complete solidarity, as Lenin pointed out in his correspondence with the group.⁶⁷¹ The conclusion one naturally draws from this is that *Iuzhnii Rabochii* wanted to work with *Iskra* to obtain contacts in different areas, and possibly to use the *Iskra* network to distribute its own publications. Whatever the case, *Iskra* was happy to carry announcements publicising the appearance of new issues of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* which clearly helped the southerners re-establish their independent operation.⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁸ Pavlovich, *Pis'mo k tovarishcham*, 11-2; *Leninskii Sbornik*, vi 60

⁶⁶⁹ *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, 10 (Sep. 1902) 18; *Iskra* 27 (Nov. 1 1902) 8

⁶⁷⁰ OA Ermanskii, *Otchet s'ezda iuzhnikh komitetov*, 11; *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 278; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 228

⁶⁷¹ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 228

⁶⁷² *Iskra* 35 (Mar. 1, 1903) 8

What can be said for its alliance with *Iskra* can also be said of *Iuzhnii Rabochii*'s work on the organising committee. Like *Iskra*, it was quite prepared to use the contacts established in the course of this work, which it apparently pursued with praiseworthy energy, for its own factional ends.⁶⁷³ However, in following this strategy, it appears to have fallen into the trap Lenin slyly avoided in the period immediately following the Belostock conference, namely that of trying to dominate the work of the organising committee and, in doing so failing to devote sufficient energy to its own factional interests. The result was that the efforts of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* produced a brilliantly organised congress totally dominated by *Iskra*, rather than its own supporters: it only managed to get sympathetic delegates elected in Kharkov out of all the local committees, with the rest of the southern region opting for *Iskra* members and supporters.⁶⁷⁴ Thus their strategy was utterly checkmated and they were put in a situation where they lacked both a reasonable argument and the political support to justify their continued separate existence. In other words, the Second Congress would request that they dissolve their infrequently appearing and apparently not very popular newspaper and concentrate their efforts on *Iskra*, which by this stage was clearly going to be appointed as the official central RSDLP newspaper.⁶⁷⁵ Given their previous declaration of solidarity with *Iskra*, it would be hard to argue against this and to put a case to the *Iskra* supporting majority for *Iuzhnii Rabochii*'s continued existence. For this reason, it seems that the southern organisation continued their previous alliance with the *Iskra* dissidents in the organising committee, the new aim of which was to develop the idea that the organising committee would, without any particular controversy, be appointed as the party's new central committee. Only thus could *Iuzhnii Rabochii* continue to play a leading role in the RSDLP despite not having much support in the local committees. It therefore seems that the 'organising committee incident' in fact represented an attempt to present the organising committee as a body which continued to exist despite the fact that its duties had been successfully carried out: there was seemingly no more work for them to do once the debate on its work at the beginning of the first session of the congress had been

⁶⁷³ *Leninskii Sbornik*, viii 346

⁶⁷⁴ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 19

⁶⁷⁵ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 410-12

completed.⁶⁷⁶ Part of this pretence involved *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and the *Iskra* dissidents trying to argue that the organising committee was bound by ties of collective discipline which obliged it to speak with one voice to congress, despite the fact that its own rules governing the composition of the congress forbade this kind of binding relationship.⁶⁷⁷ In this way they tried to give the impression that the organising committee was an officially-constituted authority in the RSDLP that was in fact above the laws it had laid down to every other organisation in the party. The issue of *Bor'ba* represented an attempt to demonstrate this notion to the entire congress. As such behind the whole issue was a fairly crude campaign to secure leading positions in the party. The invitation of Riazanov was an attempt to eclipse the hitherto unchallenged theoretical authority of the *Iskra* editorial board which represented the main threat to the positions of the members of the organising committee through their capacity to persuade a critical mass of delegates to support their plans for a reconstituted central committee. This attempt failed in so far as the majority of the congress, following a lengthy procedural debate sided with the *Iskra* editorial board, voting dissolved the organising committee, a procedure which seemed to be more or less in line with Lenin's definition of the body at the Belostock conference.⁶⁷⁸

iv) *How Martov changed his stance*

From what has been shown so far, it seems that the pre-existing tensions in *Iskra* began to express themselves in an increasingly sharp form owing to a struggle initiated by the dissidents for places on the central committee of the party. This in itself is not an original observation, as this general conclusion can be fairly easily drawn from a study of Lenin's account of the Second Congress.⁶⁷⁹ Thus, in one sense, all we have done so far in relation to this account is to add detail and provide concrete proofs, checking Lenin's account against a variety of other sources. Despite this attempt at greater objectivity, there is still a danger of a one-sided view emerging in

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 36

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 55, 57

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., 63-4

⁶⁷⁹ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 19-34

our account, in the sense that we are still a little over-reliant on Lenin's reports. Problematically, these do not appear to be entirely objective in so far as they pass over some important phases of the struggle which prove that factors apart from the struggle for places in the party leadership were involved. Indeed, the most important question Lenin leaves unanswered is that of why Martov who, in Lenin's account, starts the congress so clearly opposed to the behaviour of N, then somehow switches sides and supports her or they. In his account, Lenin merely *describes* how four informal *Iskra* caucuses took place at the Second Congress, which were initially dominated by an investigation into N's behaviour, but which then passed on to the question of choosing an *Iskra* slate for the central committee.⁶⁸⁰ We are told that the first three of these apparently took place prior to the debate on the party constitution, whilst the fourth, at which the slates were discussed, came after the disagreement on the congress floor between Martov and Lenin over paragraph one of the party constitution.⁶⁸¹ Lenin then states that this disagreement was carried over into the fourth meeting, in the sense that Martov for some reason proposed the inclusion of both *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and *Iskra* dissident elements in the central committee, whilst he and his supporters retained their firm opposition to including individuals associated with N, owing to their unpredictable behaviour.⁶⁸² However, Lenin does not attempt to answer the question of why Martov changed his mind at this point, merely noting the fact that his colleague behaved in an inconsistent manner, referring to that as 'the *Iskra*-ists of the zigzag line'.⁶⁸³ This gap in the explanation can be filled by drawing attention to the disruption caused by the Bund and the Economists, particularly during the programme debate, which had the effect of fatally slowing down the congress, and suggest that this had an effect on Martov. Another related influence was probably the removal of the congress from Brussels to London, which apparently necessitated a five day break after the thirteenth session. Significantly, it was shortly after this unexpected break that Akimov made his remarkable appeal for extended speaking rights in relation to the party programme debate.⁶⁸⁴ On this occasion Martov, replying to Akimov

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., vii 24

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., vii 28

⁶⁸² Ibid., vii 28

⁶⁸³ Ibid., vii 28

⁶⁸⁴ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 197n, 211-4

ominously registered fears for the success of the congress should Akimov's demands be granted, fears that were ultimately realised in part with the agreement to remove almost half the items from the original agenda owing to lack of time, at the beginning of the twenty-fifth session.⁶⁸⁵ It was probably at around this point that Martov began to reconsider his position, the result of which was a policy of granting concessions to the Bund, the Economists and the *Iskra* dissidents. Consequently, it seems that Lenin, possibly out of polemical motivations, under-represents the factor of the anti-*Iskra* factions' pressure and disruption in forcing a split within their opponents' ranks, which was only partially motivated by careerism. The other issues that motivated Martov's change were the rather more honourable ambition of completing the congress's agenda and of obtaining more harmonious relations between the factions present at the congress.

The first of Martov's proposed concessions appears to have been the modification of the first paragraph of Lenin's draft party constitution, the character of which is already sufficiently well-known even if its actual significance is less well understood.⁶⁸⁶ In fact, Martov's amendment permitted groups not happy with Lenin's centralising plan, which involved fusing all the diverse Russian social democratic organisations into a common party structure, to evade this process without placing themselves outside the RSDLP. At the Second Congress, Lenin's organisational policy was clearly expressed in the thirteenth paragraph of the draft constitution, which stated that only official RSDLP émigré organisation was the pro-*Iskra* League of Russian Revolutionary Social Democrats, and in the eighth item on the original agenda relating to 'particular groups in the party'.⁶⁸⁷ In this debate, many of the local splinter groups excluded from representation at congress on the grounds of their insufficient solidity were in fact declared to be dissolved, the main consequence being that their members would fuse with other, better established local groups. According

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., 212, 342-3

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., 311. Lenin's formula: 'A member of the RSDLP is one who accepts its programme and supports the Party by personal participation in one of the party organisations.' Martov's variant replaced the words after 'Party' with: 'regular personal assistance under the direction of one of its organisation' [Ibid., 10]. Extra elements to this paragraph, such as the requirement that members support the party financially were added later in the debate [Ibid., 331]

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 12-13, 367-372, 399-418.

to Lenin's formula for paragraph one of the rules, this centralistic policy of creating just one social-democratic group in each local area where there were previously more than one would have to be completed for members of the dissolved groups to be considered once more to be party members. By contrast, Martov's looser formulation permitted individual members of these excluded groups to become members of the party, provided their personal attitudes to the official local organisations were sufficiently co-operative. This would apply even if the splinter groups themselves refused to merge with the official RSDLP organisation and as such placed themselves outside the party. The strange result would be non-RSDLP organisations made up in some cases entirely of individual RSDLP members. In this way, Economists such as Akimov or Krichevskii would be able to relaunch such a journal as *Rabochee Delo* without leaving the RSDLP, despite the fact that the Second Congress had declared the journal dissolved. The only change would be that these publications would no longer be allowed to place the letters RSDLP on their title pages. They would simply appear 'unofficially', in violation of the real meaning of the congress decision, and whilst doing this their editors, contributors and supporters could remain members of the party. This rather convoluted arrangement naturally threw a lifeline to a whole series of Economist groups, who would thus be able to avoid submitting to Lenin's centralising policy by formally withdrawing their structures and publications from the RSDLP, whilst keeping their members and supporters in it, in other words by means of a constitutional loophole. The intended result was to be a plethora of unofficial factional apparatuses through which different groups could continue to pursue their own agendas without fear of being held accountable to the official local and national structures Lenin was trying to create.

The concession represented by Martov's amendment to paragraph one could potentially have reduced pressure coming from the Union Abroad delegates, the Bund and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* in that, regardless of the precise provisions contained in the remaining twelve paragraphs of the constitution, these organisations had in its first been granted substantial leave to ignore them in practice. This in turn could have potentially reduced the amount of debate on Lenin's constitution and thus helped achieve Martov's goal of a congress that made decisions on all the matters listed in its agenda. However, as we have already seen, the right of anti-*Iskra* organisations to

continue to exist was not the only issue provoking resistance to *Iskra* at the congress. This concern had no relation to the activities of N and *Iuzhnii Rabochii* clearly believed that it deserved to be more than merely tolerated in the party. Given its work on the organising committee it expected leading positions. Martov's response to this problem appears to have been to concede the point that the organising committee should form the basis for the new central committee, apparently in return for the reappointment of the old *Iskra* editorial board as the board of the official RSDLP paper without amendment by congress.⁶⁸⁸ This is significant in that, during the weeks prior to the congress, he and Lenin had worked out a scheme of elections at the congress of the leading bodies of the party in which a core of three individuals would be elected to the central committee and another three to the editorial board of the RSDLP newspaper. These six individuals would then together co-opt a number of additional members onto each body by mutual consent, thus producing a politically homogenous theoretical and practical leadership to the party.⁶⁸⁹ This did not necessarily mean that all members of this leadership team would have to be *Iskra* members, and Lenin claims that he envisaged an editorial board significantly increased in size so as to accommodate some of the most capable representatives of the anti-*Iskra* groups.⁶⁹⁰ However, such an inclusive plan does appear to have been dependent on the harmonious relations developing at the congress with the effect that, should the controversies with the various anti-*Iskra* factions be resolved, the RSDLP leadership would broadly reflect the balance of political forces at the congress itself. However, should a violent conflict emerge, *Iskra* would not flinch from using its majority to seize as many of the leading positions as it deemed necessary.⁶⁹¹ Martov's

⁶⁸⁸ Pavlovich, *Pis'mo k tovarishcham*, 11-13; IG Smidovich, *Protokoly*, 49-63 Though Martov often appears to deny this type of claim, we cannot avoid this conclusion, if, as all accept, the 'compromise slate' for the central committee consisted in three Lenin supporters, Trotsky and one *Iuzhnii Rabochii* supporter [Ibid., 50]. Martov opposed this compromise, demonstrating that even as a compromise it was biased too much towards Lenin's preferences [Ibid., 50]. One can only assume that Martov's actual preference for the central committee was something very close to the makeup of the original organising committee. The fact that he proposed the retention of the old editorial board gives a strong indication that he wanted the same for the organising committee.

⁶⁸⁹ *Leninskii Sbornik*, vi 60, 64-5

⁶⁹⁰ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 31, 309

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., vii 309

new policy was therefore not simply a break with the one previously agreed with Lenin, so much as its complete opposite: whilst Lenin intended to meet resistance to *Iskra* with a strong counteracting force in the form of a purely *Iskra* leadership of the party, Martov intended to grant the dissenting minorities a disproportionately large share in this leadership.

The original plan for including non-*Iskra* elements in the party leadership was based on the assumption that publications such as *Iuzhnii Rabochii* would not seriously oppose *Iskra*, would accept being dissolved and that it would willingly redirect its forces towards the new central publication of the RSDLP. It thus proved useless when it became ever more clear that *Iuzhnii Rabochii* was not actually as willing to fuse with *Iskra* as some of its public statements suggested. For this reason Martov, having chosen to pursue a policy of concessions, had to find a way of satisfying the southerners' ambitions in some other way. This naturally led to the idea of guaranteeing them places on the central committee, as the leading members of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* at very least had plenty of experience in this type of practical work. We can assume that this solution was to have been considered in combination with their right to publish their own newspaper 'unofficially' and for their supporters to play a full role in the local bodies of the RSDLP, given the modification to paragraph one of the constitution. In this fashion, almost all *Iuzhnii Rabochii*'s demands could be satisfied, whilst *Iskra* supporters uneasy about such significant concessions to an insignificant minority could be consoled with the privilege of not having to share control of the RSDLP paper with any other faction. The fact that this 'privilege' compared badly with the original idea of electing an all-*Iskra* central committee and an all-*Iskra* editorial board should the congress reveal significant factional conflict, was clearly a weak point in Martov's plan. It required *Iskra* to freely give up some of its power when it was clear that Lenin was not inclined to support such a policy. Despite this, Martov sought to further weaken the revolutionary Marxists' position by opposing those aspects of Lenin's constitution which seemed to indicate a degree of control of the editorial board over the central committee.⁶⁹² The means for doing this in Lenin's draft constitution was the so-called party council, which was to be made up

⁶⁹² *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 343-67; Iu O Martov, *Izbrannoe*, 74

of members of both the editorial board and two from the central committee.⁶⁹³ Formally speaking, its function was to settle disputes and to co-ordinate policy between two bodies one of which was necessarily situated abroad, the other of which worked inside Russia. However, because of the assumption that there would be a greater turnover of central committee members due to arrests, whereas the membership of the editorial board would remain constant, Martov seemed to draw the conclusion that it would institute the dominance of the latter over the former.⁶⁹⁴ The result was a second disagreement with Lenin over the party constitution concerning the precise makeup of the council and the degree of independence the central committee would enjoy in relation to it.⁶⁹⁵ Whilst all were at this stage agreed that the council should include two representatives from the editorial board and the central committee, Martov supported the idea that these four should then elect a fifth member who would possess the decisive vote in the event of any dispute.⁶⁹⁶ This was essentially a manoeuvre based on the assumption that the two representatives of the editorial board would be Martov and Lenin whilst the two from the central committee would be from the old organising committee - perhaps one representative of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and one *Iskra* dissident. Together, these three would be able to outvote Lenin, thus producing a decisive fifth member sympathetic to the maximum freedom

⁶⁹³ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 512 [paragraph 7]

⁶⁹⁴ Iu O Martov (2000) 74 «Для согласования же деятельности двух равноправных центров создавался Совет партии в качестве высшего её центра, причем Ленин предлагал его составить из троих членов, назначенных редакцией центрального органа и двух лишь Центральным комитетом. Когда это предложение провалилось, ему удалось провести составление Совета из двух представителей от ЦК, двух от ЦО и пятого назначенного съездом, чем на практике, мог быть обеспечен тот же результат – преобладание представителей редакции над представителями ЦК-та.» We can find no evidence that Lenin advocated the idea of a council formally biased towards the editorial board from the minutes of the congress, Lenin's draft, or the commission appointed to receive amendments to Lenin's draft [*Leninskii Sbornik*, vi 146-60; *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 343-67, 511-2] As such, Martov appears to exaggerate here. However, it is reasonable to assume that in the council, and generally, the representatives of the editorial board would be the senior partner relative to the central committee, hence Lenin's stipulation in the draft constitution that the editorial board members on the council should reappoint the central committee if it were arrested in its entirety, and one speech by Krasikov at the congress itself [*Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 344, 512 [paragraph 7]].

⁶⁹⁵ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 343-67

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 344-5

of action for the central committee. Martov then demanded that the central committee be allowed to co-opt new members by a simple majority in the absence of more than one reasoned protest.⁶⁹⁷ This abstruse formula was tailor-made to the requirements of the predominant bloc on the old organising committee, in so far as they had a simple majority over the consistent *Iskra*-ist and could thus co-opt a large number of their own adherents, thus reducing the latter to the smallest possible minority. The point about two, rather than one 'reasoned protest' appears to be specifically designed to prevent Krasikov raising objections to this process, which he would inevitably do. In order to frustrate it, he would at least require the support of the other consistent *Iskra*-ist, Stopani, whom Martov for some reason regarded as politically unstable.⁶⁹⁸

Thus we can see that Martov had a joined up strategy for rescuing the congress from the disruptive objections of the minority factions. Its main results were a significant shift in the balance of power at the congress, in the form of an outright split in the *Iskra* faction. It seems that Martov began to gather a small group of leading *Iskra* members around him who would support this strategy some time towards the end of the debate on the party programme.⁶⁹⁹ At the core of this group were three members of the editorial board of *Iskra* who, it seems, were to lose their positions as a result of Lenin and Martov's previous agreement to reorganise the newspapers' leadership, on its being converted into the RSDLP's official central publication.⁷⁰⁰ This exclusion was based on their failure to regularly contribute articles to the newspaper, and it is easy to see how these individuals would have a personal interest in Martov's plan.⁷⁰¹ Added to this core were several prominent individuals with personal connections to these passive editors such as Trotsky, LG Deutsch and Krokhamal.⁷⁰² Thus, including himself, Martov could marshal a group of seven supporters, though it is worth noting that of these, only three of these had votes at the congress, the rest being granted speaking rights only owing to the fact that they

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 361-2

⁶⁹⁸ PB Aksel'rod & Iu O Martov, *Pis'ma*, 78

⁶⁹⁹ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 28

⁷⁰⁰ Pavlovich, *Pis'mo k tovarishcham*, 13

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 16-7. This analysis of the productivity of the different *Iskra* editors is cited without acknowledgement by Wolfe [BD Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, 251]

⁷⁰² Pavlovich, *Pis'mo k tovarishcham*, 13

had played a significant role in the party, but did not represent a definite local or émigré organisation.⁷⁰³ This represented a significant minority of an *Iskra* caucus which seemingly amounted to sixteen individuals, not all of whom had votes as the congress: those opposed to Martov's plan amounted only to nine, of whom it seems three - Krupskaya, Noskov and DI Ul'ianov - only had speaking and not voting rights.⁷⁰⁴ The result was two *Iskra* nuclei led by Lenin and Martov, representing six and three congress votes respectively. Despite Martov's minority in the caucus, he obviously believed that he was in a stronger position owing to his policy's greater capacity to win the support of the anti-*Iskra* factions. The votes of these amounted to eighteen, against the thirty-three of *Iskra*, which meant that Martov, having already secured three *Iskra* votes, only had to secure five more to secure a majority bloc in the congress. Consequently, having been defeated in the not particularly representative *Iskra* caucus, he apparently began to canvass support among the *Iskra* supporting delegates in general, only around a third of whom actually attended the caucus meetings.⁷⁰⁵ This campaign initially appeared to be successful, with the effect that his amendments to Lenin's constitution were carried with the support of a significant minority of *Iskra* delegates voting in concert with the anti-*Iskra* factions.⁷⁰⁶

However, the fatal flaw in Martov's plan appeared to be a failure to effectively communicate his intentions to the non-*Iskra* factions, whose support he appeared to take for granted. This was clearly a mistake, and it was severely punished as a result of the instructions given by the Fifth Congress of the Bund to its delegates, of which Martov was almost certainly unaware when he made his calculations. Because of these instructions, in order to preserve his majority bloc against the Lenin group, Martov had to actually convince the Bund to break the discipline of their own organisation and accept his offer of compromise. This he did not appear to do. Not only that, there is strong evidence that his constitutional amendments were not properly understood by the Economists. The debate on the first paragraph of the Lenin constitution was utterly confused in so far as not one speaker touched on the question

⁷⁰³ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 513-5

⁷⁰⁴ Pavlovich, *Pis'mo k tovarishcham*, 13

⁷⁰⁵ VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 29

⁷⁰⁶ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 331, 353, 365-7

of the anti-*Iskra* splinter groups: Plekhanov and Axelrod engaged in learned descriptions of earlier revolutionary organisations' internal structures, whilst Lenin introduced a comparison with the French reformists.⁷⁰⁷ Neither Martov nor Trotsky sought to direct the delegates towards the true significance of the modification, probably to avoid revealing their motives: we say this because after the congress Trotsky was capable of being perfectly frank about the matter.⁷⁰⁸ Owing to this rather sneaking, surreptitious nature of their compromise, which presumably reflected the fear of a backlash from the Lenin supporters, the only representative of an Economist splinter organisation whose status would be directly affected by the modification to paragraph one, LP Makhnovets of the Petersburg Workers Organisation, actually voted with Lenin, displaying a complete, though hardly isolated, failure to understand the issue at hand.⁷⁰⁹ The rest of the Bund-Economist bloc voted with Martov, whilst *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, who would also have benefited, were split down the middle. Consequently Martov's victory on the constitutional question was neither convincing nor decisive. As a result he was unable to prevent the Union Abroad delegates walking out of the congress once their organisation was declared dissolved. The fact that it could have continued to exist 'unofficially' did not occur to these delegates, and clearly the Martovites did nothing to explain this matter to them, with the effect that the latter's majority was undermined. The loss of eight votes from the Bund and the Union Abroad represented a huge, ultimately fatal blow to the compromising strategy. The blow consisted in the fact that Martov was unable to bring to life his plans for the party leadership, which were elected according to the will of the Lenin supporters.⁷¹⁰ Incapable of avoiding defeat in these elections, Martov and his supporters actually

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 311-31

⁷⁰⁸ LD Trotsky, *Report of the Siberian Delegation* (London: New Park, 1903) 21-2: 'It is a secret to nobody that in a whole number of towns, there is alongside the Party Committee a big organised opposition (in Petersburg, Odessa, Yekaterinoslav, and Voronezh). Comrade Lenin's formula puts the members of these *Workers Organisations* outside the Party – whilst their papers continue to appear under its patronage. So as not to exclude these groups from the Party, the Central Committee would, under Lenin's formula, have had to declare them *Party organisations*. But it will not do so, it cannot do so because they have not been built on principles the Party considers adequate. It remains to be said to the members of these organisations: if you wish, gentlemen, to stay in the Party, dissolve yourselves and join the legitimate organisations of the Party.'

⁷⁰⁹ *Minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress*, 312-3, 331

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 418-46

boycotted these elections citing various technical and personal grounds which reveal no broader political principle.⁷¹¹

v) *Some Conclusions*

Previous accounts of the Second Congress have generally tried to present the disputes and walkouts that characterised this meeting as the result of Lenin attempting to impose a centralised party structure on unwilling minorities. Such a structure, as we showed at the beginning of our study, is associated with political intolerance and an authoritarian party leadership, features which are generally used to explain the departure of the Union Abroad and Bund delegations. However, the present study shows that these allegations, though endlessly repeated, enjoy the status of half-truths, and involve strategic silences on a whole range of issues, the aim being to promote the image of the Martov supporters whilst attacking the reputation of Lenin. Perhaps the most important of these silences relates to the actual policy of the Bund. On the basis of either a general ignorance or, more likely, a politically motivated unwillingness to discuss this matter, a *myth* has gained circulation that the Bund's main demand to the Second Congress was organisational 'autonomy', which would grant it some form of relief from Lenin's implacable centralising drive. This is inaccurate. The Bund already enjoyed 'autonomy' in accordance with the decision of the First Congress of the RSDLP as did all local party organisations according to the decisions of both the First and the Second Congresses. This meant that they were free to start initiatives in matters exclusively pertaining to their own area of the country: they did not need the central committee's permission to respond to small, localised expressions of discontent among the working class, or to expose local scandals among the bureaucracy or the owning classes. The Bund was not demanding a similar freedom of local initiative in relation to its work among the Jewish population. On the contrary, it demanded *complete racial segregation* within the social-democratic and labour movements. *Iskra* refused to tolerate such damaging ideas and was prepared to use its majority to prevent a division in the party occurring on racial lines. However, this resistance to the Bund's xenophobia had very little to do with its policy of creating a centralised party organisation. Had the Second Congress been prepared to withdraw

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 418-43

the entire Lenin constitution in order to appease the Bund, and substituted for it the resolutions of the First Congress of the RSDLP, or even those federal rules drafted by the Kopel'zon-Lalayants group in 1900, the Bund delegates would still have walked out. They had been instructed to do so by their own Fifth Congress, which demanded that the RSDLP recognise the Bund as the 'sole representative of the Jewish proletariat', a totally new idea in the Russian social-democratic movement aiming at the creation of separate, racially specific social-democratic organisations.

The idea that the split between Bolshevik and Menshevik took place as a result of a dispute over the RSDLP constitution has also been refuted. Several previous writers have noted the sheer improbability of this thesis, but this is not the same as identifying the real causes of the split, which we have shown to lie in differing attitudes within *Iskra* towards the non-*Iskra* section of the RSDLP. The most significant feature of Menshevism appears to be its tendency towards compromise and a fear of factional struggle inside the party. Initially this fear was reflected in a pessimistic attitude towards Lenin's organisational plan, which individuals such as Krokmal and Martov appeared to believe could not possibly work. With the successful relaunch of the organising committee, this same attitude re-emerged in the form of a small group of agents, probably Krokmal, Alexandrova and Halberstadt, deciding that the Russian *Iskra* organisation had had its day. This came in the context of a sharp clash between the Bund and the *Iskra* newspaper over the proposed character of the Second Congress, a conflict which was perceived to be having negative effects on the work of the organising committee. The result was closer relations between a section of *Iskra* members and *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, who came to be united by the idea that the cross-factional organising committee, rather than the leaders of the Russian *Iskra* organisation, should form the basis of the party's new central committee. Thus a certain mood of dissent towards Lenin's factional policy had emerged well in advance of the Second Congress, and mood gained strength on the basis of some aggressively disruptive tactics on the part of the Bund and Union Abroad delegations to the congress. These delaying tactics once again produced a clamour for compromise, based on the belief that a course of concessions would produce peace inside the party. These concessions took the form of loopholes and made-to-measure amendments designed to give the anti-*Iskra* groups greater freedom

to engage in factional activities, whilst at the same time offering them some hope of obtaining representation on the party's leading bodies.

This policy, almost certainly devised by Martov, was flawed for several reasons. Firstly, it could do nothing to satisfy the Bund's demand that it be considered the authoritative spokesman of every Jew in the RSDLP, ignoring this crucial political point of honour and aiming to solve the disagreement solely by means of organisational formulae. The second problem was the utterly *ad hoc* nature of the modifications proposed: they were clearly an improvised response to a pressing problem and, as such, were poorly understood by all but the small group around Martov. For this reason there was no proper attempt to open negotiations with any of the anti-*Iskra* factions. Instead, in a strange imitation of the Bund's policy Martov appears to have attempted to 'dictate a compromise' based on terms decided by just one side of the disagreement. This could not succeed. The final and clearly most damaging mistake Martov made was to continue to pursue a separate policy from Lenin after both the Bund and the Union Abroad had left the RSDLP. After a variety of disruptive interventions at the congress itself, this eventually resulted in the creation of an unofficial factional apparatus of the type permitted by Martov's amendment to paragraph one of the RSDLP constitution. This was presumably done to show to the departed anti-*Iskra* groupings that there was still space for them in the RSDLP, the suggestion being that the individual members of the Union Abroad and the Bund did not really need to leave the party to preserve their distinct apparatuses, and that they should therefore rejoin the party immediately. The result of this policy was supremely ironic, in so far as a political tendency apparently rooted in a desire for an end to infighting actually initiated a new phase of this infighting in the post-congress period. Thus the initial policy of the compromising *Iskra*-ists seemed to become its opposite, a phenomenon which invites the conclusion that the Mensheviks were not really the peacemakers they at first glance appear to be. Indeed, one likely explanation for their absurd battle with the Lenin group in the post-congress period could have been their ambition to adopt a strong middle ground between Economism and revolutionary Marxism, just as *Rabochee Delo* had attempted in an earlier period to balance revolutionary Marxism with revisionism. The failure of this policy and the subsequent threat of a catastrophic loss of influence could well have spurred the

Martov supporters to engage in a fight with the Lenin group, based on the belief that an effective workers' party could only be established if compromising elements were installed as its leaders, and if they used this leading position to reconcile the different contending factions in the RSDLP.

Chapter Six: Summary and General Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to define the main political developments in the history of the *Iskra* faction, from the pre-history of its foundation in the early months of 1900, through to its dissolution at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in August 1903.⁷¹² In the study, the following important facts have been demonstrated. Firstly, it has been shown that the *Iskra* project was developed as a response to a definite polarisation of opinion within the Russian social-democracy between revolutionary and reformist currents, and that the group around Lenin was in no sense responsible for the instigation of this polarisation.⁷¹³ On the contrary, in the very early stages, Lenin, Martov and Potresov clearly took a conciliatory position in this conflict, up to the point where, during the preparations for the unsuccessful 'Second Congress' at Smolensk, they were prepared to collaborate in practice rather more closely with *Rabochee Delo* than with *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, despite always proclaiming theoretical solidarity with the latter. Because of this, it seems that *Rabochee Delo* made a clear but clumsy and unsuccessful effort to recruit the Lenin group during this period. The motives behind this conciliatory position were clearly connected to the Lenin's group's desire to re-construct a viable RSDLP leadership, a

⁷¹² It is true that certain episodes in the history of *Iskra* have been passed over or touched on only lightly in this thesis. These include the early history of the faction's literary transportation into Russia prior to the formal creation of the Russian *Iskra* organisation in January 1902 and the complex and contradictory relations between the *Iskra*-ites and the 'legal Marxist' - later Cadet - PN Struve. In the case of the former episode, it appears to provide little of interest from the point of view of the type of political history attempted in this study, being mostly concerned with the technical matters connected to the establishment of print-shops, the movement of material around Russia and so on. As for the episode with Struve, the distinct shades of opinion that separated Lenin from the rest of the members of the *Iskra* editorial board have been dealt with in previous studies. Whilst it is clear these treatments remain far from complete on the level of detail in part, the question of space has prevented a more detailed discussion of these incidents in the present thesis. Bearing in mind the fact that Struve was, by this stage scarcely considered a member of the RSDLP so much as a still-nebulous 'bourgeois opposition' by most social-democrats by this stage, the question can in addition be posed of whether his activity entirely fits into the remit of the current work. Naturally, these exceptions need to be kept in mind when considering the conclusions that follow.

⁷¹³ As such, the thesis does not support the ideas of Keep concerning this matter. See: JLH Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia*, 63-6, 111

goal that was clearly more of priority for *Iskra* than for *Osvobozhdenie Truda* at this stage. Connected to this observation, it is hard not to draw the conclusion that the *Iskra* project would not have been brought to life were it not for the failure of the Smolensk 'attempt'. The support of Lenin in particular for this initiative casts serious doubt on the idea that he conceived of the *Iskra* newspaper and its supporting organisation in any degree of detail during his stay in Shushenskoe.⁷¹⁴ Whilst it is not entirely impossible that detailed plans were made at this stage, a more likely explanation is that the idea of *Iskra* and its allied bodies were developed after the failure of the Smolensk 'Second Congress', some time during the spring of 1900. The 'Draft Declaration of *Iskra* and *Zaria*', written by Lenin at this time seems to show features corresponding to a compromising position between the two main factions in the emigration, and as a result we are led to the conclusion that the well-known clash between Plekhanov and Lenin during the summer of 1900 had a political basis, Plekhanov taking a much more hostile position to *Rabochee Delo* and other reformist forces than Lenin. Not only that, there appears to be fairly clear evidence that it was Lenin who admitted to error in the wake of this meeting, one letter to Krupskaya strongly indicating his previous ignorance of the true character of the reformist trend.⁷¹⁵ Lenin's objection to the reformists was not, however, simply based on a rejection of their political views: he had already made these differences clear in the period prior to Smolensk as a condition of the co-operation with the Economists. It was more their inconsistent character he objected to, not least the capacity of certain leaders of the trend to act hypocritically, proclaiming solidarity and support with the revolutionaries in public, whilst giving support to extremely conservative elements in private. Lenin's citing of Plekhanov's *Vademecum* at this stage is particularly notable, in so far as his acknowledgement that its contents might be 'true', points to the fact that he had earlier accepted the *Rabochee Delo* argument that they represented only the excesses of an embittered individual. In connection with this, it is also necessary to consider the earlier history in which *Rabochee Delo* in a somewhat presumptuous

⁷¹⁴ This idea seems to be advocated by, for example by Tarnovskii, (KN Tarnovskii, *Revolutsionnaia Mysl'* 59-60) who denies that Lenin was ever interested in reconstructing *Rabochaia Gazeta*. Service and keep simply exclude the *Rabochaia Gazeta* episode from their accounts (R Service, *Lenin*, 77-82; J.L.H. Keep *The Rise of Social-Democracy*, 54-67)

⁷¹⁵ i.e. VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, xxxiv 44-7

fashion tried to drive a wedge between Lenin and Axelrod: probably it was only in the wake of the meeting with Plekhanov that Lenin fully realised the capacity of certain *Rabochee Delo* leaders for some rather devious manoeuvres.

The result of this realisation appears to have been a heightened level of cunning in Lenin's own political conduct, the main characteristic of which was a remarkable capacity to deal in organisational and legislative subtleties, whilst at the same time adopting certain hypocrisies of his own. The main example of this cunning in the next period was Lenin's idiosyncratic definition of the relations between *Osvobozhdenie Truda* and *Iskra* in so far as the *Iskra* editorial board, in reality, involved the input of the former even whilst 'officially' they had no direct involvement in the newspaper beyond the role of ordinary contributors. This gave the revolutionary tendency the possibility of pursuing two contradictory tactical lines simultaneously. Specifically, *Iskra* could continue to follow the softer Lenin line, whilst Plekhanov and others would not be hindered from making more direct attacks on the reformists where necessary. Further possibilities for the 'younger' *Iskra*-ites for avoiding responsibilities for Plekhanov's greater belligerence were naturally afforded through the journal *Zaria*, which was 'officially' entirely separate from *Iskra* but which was in reality directed by the same collective of six individuals. These, it seems intended to 'say different things whilst wearing different hats' in different publications at different times. Thus the countervailing pressures of on the one hand fighting *Rabochee Delo* ideas whilst at the same time co-operating with them in the practical reconstruction of the RSDLP were to be managed. This said, sharp and unpredictable turns in the policy of *Rabochee Delo*, specifically its ultra-radical turn during the spring of 1901 forced the abandonment of this policy as Lenin publicly came out against these new views. Following on from this, a new, more direct attempt at finding organisational and political unity in the emigration was attempted based on an attempt to persuade the by now inconsistent *Rabochee Delo* to adhere to Plekhanovite principles. Lenin supported this rather more than his colleagues in *Iskra*, but the project failed, in that *Rabochee Delo* quickly reverted to its gradualist principles, as a result of which Lenin seems to have finally conceded the necessity of an open factional fight with the opponents of Plekhanov. The opening manoeuvres of this conflict involved rival attempts to mobilise support among the Russian underground. *Iskra* consolidated its

full-time 'agents' and supporters into a solid organisation, the Russian *Iskra* organisation, whilst *Rabochee Delo* made another poorly prepared and democratically deficient attempt to organise an RSDLP congress. On the latter occasion, Lenin took advantage of his opponents' failings to sketch out an alternative plan for the organisation of a party congress in a letter to the Belostock meeting, many of the proposals of which were adopted, most importantly the creation of a factionally inclusive organising committee. As such, despite the heightened commitment to factional conflict from the beginning of 1902 on the part of Lenin, he did not appear to abandon his belief that the RSDLP should, for the time being at least, be broad and ideologically inclusive.

Accordingly, the next period of the *Iskra* faction's existence once again combined the opposing prerogatives of co-operation and competition with other pro-RSDLP groups such as the Bund, the Southern Union, *Iuzhnii Rabochii* and the remnants of the clearly failing *Rabochee Delo* organisation. If in the earlier period, Lenin had tried to use *Iskra* as a more conciliatory platform, whilst at the same time directing the more confrontational written material through the channels of *Zaria*, during the build-up to the Second Congress, the newspaper *Iskra* itself took on, in certain articles, a somewhat more polemical tone in relation to its factional rivals, whilst the organising committee became, in principle at least, the site of rather more harmonious practical work between the various RSDLP factions. In reality, this neat segregation of conflict from co-operation was inevitably subject to strain, in so far as *Iskra* representatives worked hard to secure a dominant position for itself on the committee, apparently holding up the work on at least one occasion when their forces were too weak. Ultimately, Lenin resolved the practical question of how to carry out work directed to building up the faction on the one hand, with work building up the party on the other, by delegating much of the latter work to the usefully enthusiastic representatives of *Iuzhnii Rabochii* on the organising committee, who in reality put in place the practical arrangements toward the congress whilst neglecting to build up their own factional forces. It seems to be for this reason that certain aspects of Lenin's Belostock plan were not, in the end, realised, but in compensation for this, the superior distribution and content of the *Iskra* newspaper seems to have ensured the capture by the revolutionaries of the great majority of non-Jewish local committees in

the months immediately prior to the Second Congress. *Iuzhnii Rabochii*, by contrast, was able to gain the support of just one. As for the Jewish pale, where the Bund was dominant, the organising committee's own rules of representation, doubtless under the influence of Lenin and *Iskra* penalised federal type structures in general, and the Bund's failure to either pay attention to, or effectively oppose this provision ensured that the main faction threat to *Iskra* was utterly disabled in terms of its representation at the Second RSDLP congress. As such, *Iskra*'s dominance appeared at this stage to be complete and at the same time not without legitimacy, a state of affairs that would have been reflected at the Second Congress were it not for the emergence at this time of certain dissident forces inside the Russian *Iskra* organisation. The basic complaints of these dissident forces appears to have been that, in so far as the organising committee and not the Russian *Iskra* organisation had done the greater part of the preparatory work towards the Second Congress, the latter had outlived its usefulness, serving the purpose only of stirring up disagreement with opposing factions and threatening a complete split in the RSDLP through its competitive attempts to take over local committees. These pre-existing tensions proved damaging in the face of some fairly crude rearguard tactics on the part of the Bund and the *Rabochee Delo* delegation to the Second Congress which, it seems, a section of the *Iskra* supporters unfairly blamed on Lenin's intransigence. In fact the Bund representatives were operating in accordance with binding instructions agreed prior to the Congress, which made meaningful negotiations impossible. The result was the well-known split in *Iskra* between the 'majority' and the 'minority', as the latter unsuccessfully attempted to make concessions to the non-*Iskra* factions in terms of the party constitution and the political complexion of its leadership, and the departure of the Bund and *Rabochee Delo* delegates from the congress.

From the information presented in this thesis, a significant proportion of which has not been subject to previous detailed study, a number of conclusions can be drawn about each of the individuals, factions and institutions discussed. Starting with the character of Lenin, it is perhaps not altogether groundbreaking to note that he was clearly a wily politician, capable of at very least medium-term strategic thinking as well as a certain amount of hypocrisy in the face of an opponent, as the division of functions between *Iskra* and *Zaria* seems to indicate. Equally, there is absolutely

nothing to suggest that his behaviour during the period studied was grossly irregular or cynical. One main feature of his outlook appears to be a strongly legalistic frame of mind, reflected in an enthusiasm for sticking to written agreements, a strong aversion to those who broke them and an unusual capacity to draw fine distinctions between different functions and responsibilities. Apart from this, there is strong evidence that, at least in the period studied, Lenin supported the maximum inclusion of a broad rank and file in the work of the RSDLP, an attitude which shows particularly strongly in his communication to the Belostock meeting which, for reasons that can only be guessed at, fails to find a place in most previous discussions of this period, still less detailed analysis. In addition, the method referred to in a later period as that of the 'united front' - co-operation in one field of work combined with competition in another in relation to one and the same agency - is particularly marked in Lenin's thinking at this stage. A final point of interest is the fact that Lenin clearly made tactical mistakes on more than one occasion during the period in question, accidentally undermining his own position, and that he subsequently corrected most of these errors either of his own accord, or in response to criticism, especially from Plekhanov. As for the other significant figures, the evidence presented here makes it seem likely that Martov was actually a fairly late addition to the cause of Menshevism, and was probably persuaded, as an authoritative figure to front the campaign for compromise at the Second Congress by some other less well-known figure or figures. This seems likely given that, prior to the split he had expressed a negative attitude towards both Krokhamal and Alexandrova. As for the leaders of *Rabochee Delo* and the Union Abroad, they come across in a less than flattering light, owing to the tendency of individuals such as Kopel'zon to make contradictory alliances with incompatible individuals. Whilst there is clearly a reason for this type of action - he and his co-thinkers were trying to build an ideologically broad social-democracy that included groupings to the left and to the right of *Rabochee Delo* - it is hard not to conclude that they went about this the wrong way in so far as his alliances were essentially false proclamations of complete solidarity, rather than the conditional alliances preferred by Lenin, where he honestly stated points of disagreement as well as interests in common. Equally one cannot but feel irritation at the manner in which the anonymous *Rabochee Delo* reviewer⁷¹⁶ distorts both the views of Lenin and

⁷¹⁶ i.e. *Rabochee Delo* 1 139-42

Axelrod to his own advantage, as part of a rather defensive attempt to deny that problems exist in the Russian underground. Such behaviour appears to be that of someone searching for prestige rather than giving serious thought to the development of his political party and on this occasion it also involved a presumptuous attempt to speak for Lenin without his consent. Not only that, the discovery of this type of behaviour among the adherents of the Union Abroad leads to the question of whether some of the many negative characterisations of Plekhanov's activity during and immediately prior to the period studied in this thesis are fair. Of all the members of the revolutionary social-democratic tendency, Plekhanov appears to have been the most consistently hostile to *Rabochee Delo* and its allies from the Bund in the reformist camp, and whilst some of the background to the split of April 1900 goes beyond the remit of this study, one nonetheless discovers a certain justification for Plekhanov's extreme sense of grievance in relation to the supporters of *Rabochee Delo* when considering the articles connected to the conflict with Lenin and Axelrod in this journal.

Turning to the various factional apparatuses, the study clearly shows that the *Iskra* newspaper was much more than a repository for polemic, though it did act at times as a forum for debate among different tendencies.⁷¹⁷ It also clearly served as a tool aiding the organisation of the Second Congress, in so far as it published declarations of support for the organizing committee, the committee's declaration and so on.⁷¹⁸ Equally, it is clear that *Rabochee Delo* was not above exchanges of this sort,⁷¹⁹ whilst the Bundist *Poslednie Izvestiia*, despite being a 'publication' printed on a single sheet of paper, frequently gave itself over entirely to the criticism of *Iskra*.⁷²⁰ Similar imbalances are to be observed in some of the surviving issues of *Iuzhnii Rabochii*.⁷²¹ Whilst the present study has, admittedly, not focused on the contents of any of these publications to any great degree, one cannot but note as a general observation that, of all of them, it was *Iskra* that contained the greatest proportion of

⁷¹⁷ See note 518

⁷¹⁸ See note 526; VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vi 309

⁷¹⁹ e.g. *Rabochee Delo* 1 139-42

⁷²⁰ See note 644

⁷²¹ i.e. *Iuzhnii Rabochii* 10 (Sep 1902)

and the greatest variety of genuine news stories. Reports were published in its columns from a great diversity of towns in Russia, including a great number that did not have representation at the Second Congress, and these spoke not only of the labour movement, but of every aspect of Tsarist oppression, taking up a variety of non-proletarian but pro-democratic causes. It is therefore tempting to conclude that it was these features of the paper that made it so authoritative rather than the occasional polemical article, most of which were in any case kept off the front page. As a rule, the *Iskra* newspaper cannot be judged to have been narrowly intolerant in relation to other trends in the revolutionary movement, publishing letters and articles of criticism from opponents, as well as announcements produced by them in a professional journalistic fashion. By contrast, one should note the poor journalistic quality of some of the content of *Iskra*'s rivals. *Rabochee Delo* and its supplement often contained articles of remarkably poor quality, not least the infamous 'Historic Turn', which yielded one of Lenin's most prominent polemical replies of this period.⁷²² This was a painfully naive and pretentious production which seems to entirely justify Lenin's sharp and broad ranging criticism, not least for its ill-thought out glorification of violence. This said, the *Listok*'s reporting of student disturbances during the spring of 1901 is somewhat more detailed than that of *Iskra*, representing entirely credible reporting. The Bund's *Poslednie Ivestia* was, despite its brevity, generally lively, containing numerous reports from the front line of the class struggle among the Jewish workers.

If the role of the various émigré wings of *Iskra* proves to have been, by and large, uninteresting during the period studied in so far as they engaged in no separate organised campaigns but functioned instead mainly as ballast in the struggle with the émigré Economists, the investigation of the Russian *Iskra* organisation has revealed a whole succession of surprises. First of all, it should by now be abundantly clear that the organisation was in no sense 'the party' in Lenin's world-view, though there is a very strong case to be made for the idea that it forms the model for what he refers to as 'an organisation of revolutionaries' in *What Is To Be Done?*⁷²³ This too, clearly, has nothing to do with 'the party' - the RSDLP - at this stage. Russian *Iskra* was clearly a

⁷²² i.e. 'Where to Begin?' (VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, v 13-24)

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, v 451-67

component part of the RSDLP which had the aim of drawing as many local committees of the party into its own orbit and, where possible, merging them with itself. As such, it had the clear aim of taking over the RSDLP from within, winning it broadly speaking 'from the bottom up' to its own theoretical and practical views, in other words of reshaping the party in its own image. In relation to this campaign, it should be noted that *Iskra* was not the first RSDLP faction to attempt such a project, as the majority of the coalition assembled prior to the Smolensk congress attempt shared a similar idea, based on an abandonment of the party constitution approved by the First Congress and a reorganisation of it along more federal lines. The same can also be said for the *Rabochee Delo* takeover of the Union Abroad, though this was obviously done on a slightly smaller scale. As such, there does not appear to be anything abnormal or grossly unfair in Russian *Iskra*'s activity or aims: precedents had been set for its aim of seizing power and transforming the RSDLP. Apart from that, it is perhaps worth noting that the process of centralistic 'fusion' supported by *Iskra*, and which it aimed to introduce into the RSDLP as a whole did not appear to imply an authoritarian leadership style or the suppression of dissent. This should seem obvious if we consider the numerous challenges to Lenin from within Russian *Iskra* discussed in this study. Alexandrova's letter to the foreign leadership of *Iskra* did not yield the least 'disciplinary measure' and in general, the agents appear in practice to have been responsible for acting on their own initiative: without question they were not bound by detailed orders from abroad or from the Russian headquarters in Samara. Finally, it is worth reiterating the point that Russian *Iskra* was clearly not an organisation made up exclusively, or even predominantly of full-time, 'professional' revolutionaries. Of those whose names appear regularly in this study, it seems likely, though it is not yet proven, that Alexandrova was paid, having been sent from abroad on a fairly well-defined assignment. GM Krzhizhanovskii, by contrast, despite being the lynchpin of the whole structure appears to have been holding down some kind of paid employment. Others, such as Piatnitskii and Bobrovskiaia appear to have endured near-starvation conditions, if their memoirs are to be believed, testimony which illustrates just how one-sided and distorted is the popular view that the notorious Leninist 'professional' was a middle class intellectual. The Jewish status of a significant number of the agents itself demonstrates how far away most of them were, in reality, from a privileged position in society.

As for the other RSDLP factions, the study does not go into the internal politics of the Bund to any great degree, but it is nonetheless clear that previous representations of its conduct at the Second Congress remain inadequate, failing to deal with the question of the Bund's obstruction of the proceedings.⁷²⁴ It can now be considered proven that the allegation voiced by certain *Iskra* supporters, namely that the Bund acting in accordance with quite detailed orders from their organisation in violation of the congress standing orders, were entirely correct.⁷²⁵ Equally, we should note that the Bund was not demanding 'autonomy' from an overbearing party leadership at the Second Congress, as certain authorities have argued.⁷²⁶ 'Autonomy' had been granted to it both in the RSDLP constitution of 1898 and the new version of 1903: indeed all subordinate parts of the new RSDLP apparatus, such as local committees were required to act 'autonomously' in relation to the central committee, regardless of the rights the latter had over them. In fact, the Bund leadership was clearly demanding what hostile observers might term 'racial segregation' in the party, the negative and politically divisive consequences of which are not hard to imagine. Having failed to convince the *Iskra* supporters of the virtues of this plan, owing to the internationalist outlook of the latter and the significant proportion of Jewish activists present in their ranks, all the evidence suggests the conclusion that the Bund delegation sought to disrupt the proceedings of the Second Congress in a fairly crude fashion, seemingly with the aim of either getting the meeting abandoned or its agenda truncated. This behaviour ultimately had its effect, in so far as the agenda was reduced in size and the *Iskra* delegation split, but ironically, it was the rigid discipline of the *Bund* (as opposed to *Iskra*) which prevented it from gleaning any real advantage from this situation: the Jewish delegates left in accordance with binding instructions from their own congress. As for the remaining factions, it is important to note that *Rabochee Delo* had become more or less inconsequential in terms of its organised support in the period following the Belostock meeting, during which time the short-lived Southern Union-*Iuzhnii Rabochii* organisation also met with collapse. As such, the small size of these groups' delegations to the Second Congress is no real surprise:

⁷²⁴ i.e. Ch Panavas, *Bor'ba Bol'shevikov*, 1-29; HJ Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia*, 207-220

⁷²⁵ This in fact supports the earlier conclusion of Tobias (HJ Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia*, 207)

⁷²⁶ i.e. I Getzler, *Martov*, 76; R Service, *Lenin – A Political Life*, 102

whilst in the earlier period, *Rabochee Delo* could cause more serious problems to the revolutionary Marxists so long as the conflict was confined to the emigration, once their struggle spread into Russia, it was inevitably the Bund that would form the mainstay of the anti-*Iskra* forces. The power of this resistance in the later period was, naturally, undermined by the exclusive racial basis of the Bund, which confined its activities to those areas where the authorities permitted Jewish workers to live. It seems that the Economists did have some support in the Great Russian cities until the months preceding the Second Congress, but that these did not co-ordinate their activity with one another in the way the revolutionary *Iskra* had done, and nor did they issue a publication of any sort after Belostock. Thus they were utterly weakened in the struggle with *Iskra* for the loyalties of local committees.⁷²⁷

Turning to the RSDLP itself, one of the most significant points demonstrated by this thesis remains that the party did not simply disappear following the First Congress. It cannot be reduced to its central bodies and the great majority of components groups who founded the RSDLP - the Unions of Struggle, the Union Abroad and the Bund - continued to exist right up to 1903, considering themselves parts of a common, though not at all well-organised party. The idea of the Second Congress really being a 'founding' congress appears to have originated with the Bund some time during the life of the organising committee, a notion firmly rejected by all other participants.⁷²⁸ The idea should not be taken seriously unless a political party is to be defined exclusively by the existence of a central apparatus. The present thesis has shown that during the period 1898-1903, different factions expressing different programmatic and organisational preference held sway at different times, and that the supporters of Lenin were quite capable of accepting a subordinate position in a broad party led by such opposing factional forces. By contrast, the history of the Second Congress shows that the reverse was not the case and that, having earlier enjoyed a period of dominance of their own, the anti-revolutionary tendencies were prepared to leave the party, splitting it the moment the policies and leadership of *Iskra* were endorsed. Naturally, this does not reflect well on the supposed democratic sensibilities or tolerance of the anti-*Iskra* elements or the Mensheviks, whose 'boycott' of the

⁷²⁷ The evidence supporting this has been presented in chapter four, section three of the present study.

⁷²⁸ See chapter four, section four.

leadership elected at the Second Congress seems to have been based on nothing more than a series of conjectures as to the nature of the party regime to come. As has already been noted, the evidence from the period studied in this work suggests that the *Iskra* faction was not authoritarian or rigid in its internal regime, and a result there seems to be few grounds for suspecting that an *Iskra* led RSDLP would possess such qualities. The nature of the 'centralisation' aimed at by the Bolsheviks appears to have involved more than anything else a rejection of the racial attitudes of the Bund, and, as a secondary factor, a rejection of a situation where a multitude of tiny groups and infrequently-appearing newspapers operating in each location refused to have much to do with one another, as a result of often fairly petty splits, grudges and poorly argued theoretical differences.⁷²⁹ For the centralisers of Lenin's persuasion, this situation seems to have represented an inexcusable duplication of function and waste of resources. If we consider passages in *What Is To Be Done?* we can see that Lenin also saw them as a source of naivety and bad practice - *kustarnichestvo* - in which the best success of local groups were not publicised generally throughout the party, as a result of which they were not imitated on a broader scale. It is surely for this reason that the Lenin trend appears to have aimed at drawing all isolated local groups into the common work of *Iskra*, which was by this stage the newspaper of the RSDLP, and into the official RSDLP apparatus. Conversely, there is not the least evidence, if we consider the pages of even the factional *Iskra* that these minority views would be suppressed as a result of this admitted loss of independence, or that individuals would be unfairly treated for holding such views which, if they made up a majority in a previously isolated social-democratic organisation, would surely represent an insignificant minority in the RSDLP as a whole.

The question of the exact reasons for the split in *Iskra* has been subject to much discussion in previous studies,⁷³⁰ but few have considered the dynamics of the Russian *Iskra* organisation, as opposed to the editorial board, as the potential source of the disagreement. Generally speaking, one cannot doubt that there were numerous tensions within the *Iskra* editorial board throughout the period up to the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which have only been touched on in this thesis. It is also true

⁷²⁹ See chapter four, sections three and four

⁷³⁰ See chapter one, section three

that these tensions have received probably excessive and one-sided attention on the part of those searching for the causes of the split, to the point where revisiting them in the current study has been judged superfluous. The main point in relation to them appears to be that most of them, however sharp their character, appear to have been resolved well in advance of the Second Congress, whereas dissonances within Russian *Iskra* appear to have been growing at this point. Not only this, the characters who formed the poles of the most ideologically significant feuds, Plekhanov and Lenin, actually showed maximum solidarity with one another at the Second Congress, and did not head the opposing sides of the split. This lends strength to the argument in favour of a 'Russian' origin to the split in which figures such as Krokhamal and Alexandrova played more or less accidental roles, and whose views on the inappropriateness of *Iskra*'s occasionally combative factional stance acquired monstrously exaggerated force in the face of the Bund's actions at the Congress. This idea that *Iskra* - more specifically, Leninist-Krasikovite - intransigence had driven the Bund and *Rabochee Delo* from the RSDLP may well have seemed attractive in the midst of the conflict itself, but the subsequent appearance of the minutes of the Bund's Fifth Congress shows this assumption to be false: it was clearly the Bund delegates who were bound to an inflexible course as a result of the orders they received at this congress, and which they executed more or less to the letter. As such, it is tempting to conclude that Menshevism was initially founded on entirely false premises and that the strategy of compromises it initiated was equally pointless. In their defence, one can only note that the argument frequently promoted by Lenin sympathisers that the Mensheviks were motivated almost exclusively by a desire to seize the leadership of the RSDLP for themselves in an unprincipled grab for power is not really justified: the followers of Martov probably did seem to want to find a way of reversing the departure of the Bund and there is no justification for assuming that, having left the RSDLP at the Second Congress, the Bund could not have been persuaded to return at a later stage. One crucial problem in the conduct of the Mensheviks would appear to be a failure to communicate their aims effectively, and a preference for keeping their stratagems secret, a feature which allows great scope for misinterpretation of their motives.

In concluding this study, its author would like to once more draw attention to the fact that it has, whilst introducing new primary material into the discussion around Lenin, the amount of this material available remains huge and that this study is of definition incomplete, even within the strict limits of the years 1899-1903. This has been a political history illustrating how the faction came to acquire the dominant role in the broader RSDLP, with particular emphasis on the way in which, under the leadership mainly of Lenin, the faction got the better of its opponents. As such there has been minimal examination of the relations within the *Iskra* editorial board, the contents of the faction's publications as a whole, the finances of the group or the practical matter of how literature was transferred into Russia, how clandestine meetings were organised, the acknowledged techniques of secrecy and so on. As such, the complete history of the *Iskra* faction is still far from written. Some of these areas, such as the relations within the editorial board have been dealt with elsewhere and at sufficient length.⁷³¹ However, the question of finances and the detailed study of the social-democrats' clandestine work and financial arrangements, if there has been a modicum of interest in it in the Russian language, has entirely failed to capture the interest of English language scholars. One cannot but hope that future studies of this or any other period of Lenin's political life might focus a little less on the well-known leaders and the broad ideological distinctions that divided the Russian social-democracy and a little more on the practical details, in any of the senses described above, and perhaps a little more on the work during this period of middle ranking activists such as Alexandrova, Piatnitskii or Krasikov which remains practically unknown even in Russian scholarship. At the same time, if the period is to be understood properly, it seems essential to study not so much the individuals as the bodies, groups and institutions they created, so as to prevent an all-sided view being obtained, one which does not simply echo the partisan views of one participant or another in a conflict. On the basis of the researches that have produced this study, the primary and secondary material for such studies should not be hard to find, even for a scholar who for whatever reason is unable to spend a considerable amount of time in Russia.

⁷³¹ See I Kh Urilov, 'Iz Istorii Raskola RSDRP', 15-17 for a useful review of such studies in the Russian language.

The main consequences of the period studied in this thesis also seems to represent a potentially fruitful area for further research, namely the period of strife between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks between the Second and the Fourth Congresses of the RSDLP, the latter of which produced a temporary reconciliation of the two sides. As with the conflicts discussed in the present thesis, certain key events of the next period are well known. These include Lenin's withdrawal from first the editorial board of *Iskra* and then, following his co-option to this body, a second resignation from the central committee. This was followed by the foundation of a Bolshevik factional apparatus⁷³² within the RSDLP, which campaigned to win over the local committees to the idea of a new RSDLP congress much in the fashion of the *Iskra* faction of the previous period. However, these relatively well-known events are intertwined with less well-known ones that usually seem to get left out of the more general histories of Bolshevism and Russian social-democracy or biographies of Lenin and his rivals. These omissions pose some intriguing questions. For example, few are aware that the Mensheviks actually created their own factional apparatus in September 1903.⁷³³ This development is interesting not so much from the point of view of 'who started it', but in the sense that Martov's modification to the RSDLP constitution appears to have permitted precisely such structures to be created. This poses the question of whether Lenin, in an attempt to put down the post-Second Congress rebellion felt hamstrung by this constitution, and whether this was not the true reason he adopted a seemingly conciliatory attitude towards the Martovites in this period immediately following the Second Congress.⁷³⁴ Similarly, the breach between Plekhanov and Lenin that took place at the November 1903 meeting of the League Abroad, and which undermined Lenin's position has on at least one occasion been connected to certain allegations made public by Martov at this stage, which exposed Lenin as disloyal to Plekhanov.⁷³⁵ However, closer examination of the minutes of this meeting appear to show that Martov's comments produced a negative reaction not

⁷³² i.e. the 'Bureau of the Committees of the Majority'. For details of the circumstances of this faction's foundation, see VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, vii 491-6

⁷³³ *Leninskii Sbornik* vi 246-9

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, vi 213-8

⁷³⁵ i.e. R Service, *Lenin – A Political Life*, 108

only from Lenin, but also from Plekhanov and Trotsky, with Plekhanov actually leading the protests against Martov.⁷³⁶ When considered alongside several further documents from this next period,⁷³⁷ this leads to the speculative conclusion that Plekhanov actually broke with Lenin not necessarily because the latter was perceived as disloyal, difficult to work with or inflexible in constitutional matters, so much as because he wanted to keep the scandal developing around the editorial board hidden from the eyes of the rank and file of the party, whilst Lenin wanted precisely this rank and file to resolve the disagreement. Thus it seems that, in the following period too, what at first glance appear to be egotistical squabbles actually contain a certain amount of logic and principle, an investigation of which could produce interesting and illuminating works of history. Moreover, there is a vast amount of available primary material connected to these and other events which remain to be properly examined, ranging from the contents of the *Leninskii Sbornik*, the polemics of Plekhanov from this period,⁷³⁸ the contents of the new *Iskra* and *Vpered*, the minutes of various congresses and committees, and so on.

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⁷³⁶ IG Smidovich, *Protokoly*, 66-8

⁷³⁷ GV Plekhanov, *Sochineniia*, xiii 11-3, 41-5

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, xiii, 14-22, 81-93.116-40

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